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SOME TO BE PASTORS

Some to be Pastors

PETER H. PLEUNE

And he gave some to be pastors; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—Eph. 4:11-13.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.—I Tim. 4:14-16.



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Dedication

To my wife and daughter who have devotedly shared
with me the bitter and the sweet
experiences which constitute
the undertones of
this book

Foreword

IT IS PERHAPS JUST AS WELL THAT THE AVERAGE church member never sees a catalogue of a theological seminary. He is not too sure always that his minister is a normal human being; and to find that his pastor studied such things as Apologetics, Homiletics, Hermeneutics, and the like, would only increase his bewilderment about the kind of preparation some of us must have had for our task. Then to learn that the special study of a minister's work as a pastor is called Pastoral Theology could not help very much in his understanding of how often we act the way we do. We can almost hear him muttering to himself, "Pastoral Theology! What has Theology to do with it? Why don't they teach just plain pastoral common sense?"

There was an unusually rare understanding in the reply I overheard one church member make to another on this subject.

One asked, "What is it that our preacher is going to teach at the Seminary?"

"Pastoral Theology," the other replied.

"What's that?" asked the first man.

"That," said the other, "is what a minister has

to know about being a pastor that he can't get out of books."

And here am I trying to put it into a book!

To be a good pastor does require a wisdom that is not academic. No set of rules could be laid down, or textbook be written, to fit the various demands of a pastor's work. It is both too simple and too complex for that.

Even a loose definition of pastoral work is difficult. It is not enough to say that in the pulpit a minister is a preacher, and that outside of the pulpit he is a pastor; for preaching too is, or ought to be, a pastoring of the flock. We offer no definition of a pastoral ministry lest we seem to limit it.

We do have a deep conviction that the determining factor in the field of a pastor's endeavor is not a matter of technique but of inner spirit and attitudes, and of the utter commitment of one's personal life, without pride or self-seeking, to the glorious task of hallowing, comforting, healing, and redeeming the lives of men.

We confess that we do not know much about it. And what we do know may not be interesting or helpful to anyone else. But we have thought much about it. We have struggled along at the task for thirty years. For a few years we tried to teach a class in a theological seminary in what the catalogue listed as Pastoral Theology. We do know that many young ministers feel their inadequacy

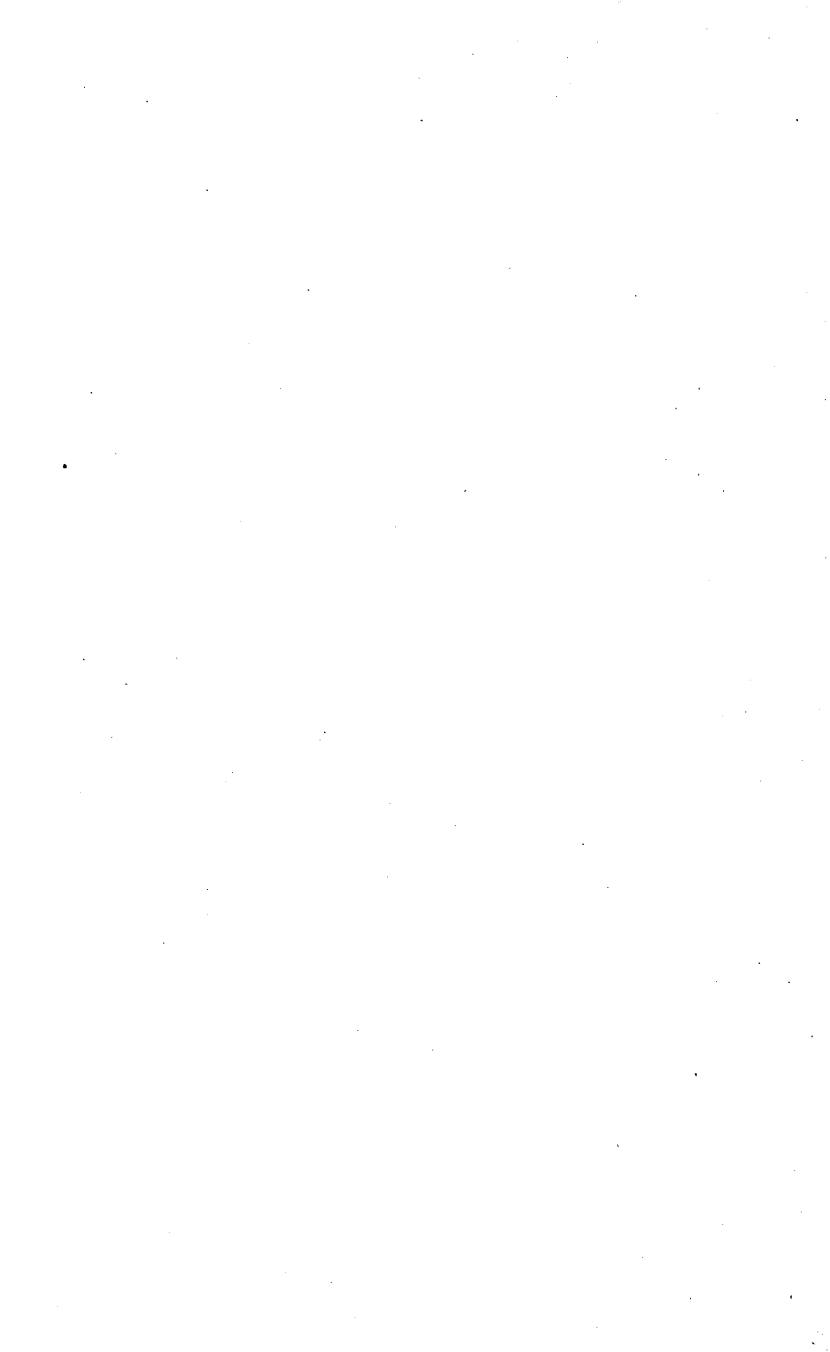
here. It has helped us, and we hope them, as we have talked together about it.

This little book is the result of a suggestion from a younger minister that we jot down some of the conversations we have had about the things that enter into being a good minister of Jesus Christ. That is all that we have tried to do. We have sought to follow the conversational manner in order to avoid the formal and the didactic. We have taken many things for granted. We naturally assume an intimate personal relation of the minister to his God, and his dependence on God for strength and guidance in all things. We will be thinking together primarily about some of the ways in which we may give "all that is within us" to the task for which God has appointed us, of shepherding some of his flock.

Should any laymen come upon this book, we trust that it may serve to increase their patience with their pastor, and give direction to some daily sustaining prayer in his behalf.

I wish to express my appreciation to President Frank H. Caldwell and Dean Lewis J. Sherrill, of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and to Dr. Teunis E. Gouwens, for their critical reading of the manuscript of this book, and to the latter particularly for his hearty encouragement to begin to write these chapters out of our ministerial experiences.

PETER H. PLEUNE



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I

The Gospel According to You

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT IN A SINGLE GENERATION we have moved from the horse-and-buggy days to a streamlined life. And the church has not escaped this movement of change. We have been swept along on this tide of innovation until some of us on the far side of middle life hardly recognize the church in which we began our ministry. Stately Gothic structures have replaced the little white meetinghouse. The old frock coat has been discarded for the flowing robe, and the center pulpit for a chancel. Above all, a chancel! Some ministers just cannot preach at all until they have rebuilt the old church to include a chancel. Nonliturgical churches too must have their processional, entrances, and recessional. We have translations of the Bible in everyday speech, streamlined sermons, unified services combining study and worship. We have our church secretaries and mimeograph machines in a church office. We have directors of religious education. We have theological education comparable to specialized university courses. We ministers do more things, attend more meetings, raise more money, and plan more things than the ministers of yesterday ever

dreamed of doing. I wonder what John Wesley or Phillips Brooks would think about what we call the march of progress in the church.

Well, I imagine they would probably think it just that—a mark of advance. A thing need not be wrong because it is new. Wesley and Brooks would doubtless be quick to use some of the new methods and materials of our day. I know that I have no desire to be limited by the restricting forms and tools of the ministry of my boyhood. It is worth noting these changes, not for the purpose either of approval or of criticism, but that we may face squarely the fact of how little difference they make in the fundamental qualities of our ministry. The trappings of life change from age to age, but not life itself.

Still the fundamental need of the ministry is a man.

No change we make in the material structure of the church, in method, or in program, can alter the fact that the gospel remains a living force only by contact of life with life. The most adequate church equipment with the most efficient organization is cold and lifeless unless it centers in some personality. Someone has said that there is only one problem in the world, only one problem in the church. It is the problem of finding the right man.

Being a minister of the gospel involves many things. It is more an involved task today than ever before. A man must be most everything to be a good minister. He must possess some of the

qualities of a businessman, a banker, and a general of an army. He must preach and organize and direct. He still needs, however, more than all to be a pastor. Nothing that happens in the changing structure of the church's life, or ever may happen, will alter that need. Our life may be streamlined, but it is still life. And it still takes life to minister to life.

A minister must be both a preacher and a pastor. I am conscious of many limitations in my own ministry. But any lack of appreciation for the place and power of the pulpit is not one of them. Time, thought, and prayer must be given to the sermon. "Blood, sweat, and tears" must go into the preparation. To preach is an infinite privilege. The man who slights this task is slighting his Lord. The people want good preaching. They are infinitely patient with the kind of preaching we give them. They deserve better than they get. But they want and deserve a pastor as well as a preacher. There is no good reason why they should not have both in the same man.

Now the pastoral ministry is a personal ministry. And when we think together about a pastoral ministry, there is only one place to begin, and that is with ourselves. That is where we not only begin, but where we must continue, and where we will end—with ourselves. We are prone to think that our ministry is determined by the type of church we serve, the co-operation of our official boards, the responsiveness of our congregation,

the kind of community of which we are a part. We can muster any number of reasons for our success or failure, especially for our failure. But the main reason is always in ourselves. When we fail, some personal qualities have always been a factor in that failure. When we succeed, personal qualities in us will have been invariably a greater factor than any method or technique employed. It is of little importance for us to think at all about a pastoral ministry unless we consider ourselves problem number one. It is well to discount ourselves in any success, for others have always shared it. The true pastor will always recognize that in every failure he has had some definite share. To paraphrase a Negro spiritual, "It's not my church, and not my officers, and not my community, it's me, it's me, it's me, O Lord." We can never leave ourselves out of the reckoning.

There is a gospel according to you and to me.

Few of us would agree on what makes a good minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. We would probably get an entirely different set of answers from the folks in the pews, and some surprising ones. We know, at least, that there is no mold for shaping ministers. They cannot be turned out on some assembly line. The whole task of the ministry is too specialized and individual for that. And the minister has no blueprint to follow. Even his Bible is least of all a set of rules. Jesus told his disciples what they were to preach, but scarcely a word as to how they were to do it. How much easier it

would be for both church and minister if we had a model of a perfect minister and could say, "This is it."

That, however, is also the glory of the ministry. Because there is no exact design for the minister, our own talent of ability and personality cannot be ruled out. There are frequent illustrations of two men utterly different proving to be effective ministers in the same place and under the same conditions. Everyone knows of some church which, having lost its pastor, is certain that it can never find another who could fit its situation so well, only to find that another man different in age, appearance, personality, method, and as unlike the former pastor as anyone could be, succeeds in that task with the approval and the enthusiasm of all. We say that this shows how God can use any man. Yes, and it shows how God must truly have the man, not just a brain or a technique.

President Woodrow Wilson, a son of the manse, and himself a Presbyterian elder, in an address on "The Minister and the Community," said:

You do not have to *be* anything in particular to *be* a lawyer. I have been a lawyer and I know. You do not have to *be* anything in particular, except a kind-hearted man, perhaps, to *be* a physician. You do not have to *be* anything, nor undergo any stirring spiritual change, in order to *be* a merchant. The only profession which consists in *being* something is the ministry of our Lord and Saviour—and it does not consist in anything else.

There is then truly a gospel according to you.

In the training of the Twelve Jesus laid down no rule of thumb for them. He offered no course in pastoral efficiency. He said something, however, that, had we heard it from his own lips, we might have asked that he repeat it to be sure we had heard aright. And this is it: "As my Father hath sent me [into the world], even so send I you!" You! What had the Father done in sending him into the world? "The Word became flesh." He was the truth of God embodied in a living person. In that land of the prophets he was the greatest preacher of them all. Men had never heard his like. "Never man spake like this man." Yet, did the throngs crowd him just to hear him preach? He was even more a different person than they had ever known. In his person he drew men to him as the flower draws the bee. The fishermen left their nets to follow him not because he proclaimed a new theology. They never did quite grasp his full truth until after the Resurrection. They left all, and followed him, almost blindly, because of the attraction of his person, the light in his eye, the smile on his face, the winsomeness of his conversation, the gentleness of his manner; because in him they saw light and glory, and something that made their fishing a drab and little thing.

How do you visualize Jesus when you think of him yonder in Galilee? When in imagination you join the crowds to press close to him, what sort of picture has formed in your mind? Is he delivering a sermon, or do you see him at a wedding

feast, feeding a multitude, healing the sick, with the little children gathered about him, in a boat with his disciples, going about doing good? Pearls of wisdom drop from his lips, it is true. But they tell us less of himself than his stopping by the way to touch a blind man's eyes, or his finger writing in the sand as he drops his own eyes before the burning shame in the eyes of a sinful woman, or his walking along the streets of Jerusalem with Zacchaeus to be the guest in the home of this man who was scorned as a sinner. Jesus did not say, "He that hath heard me," but, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." God put his truth into the life of Jesus. And Jesus sent out his men to be something, not only to say something.

There are definite ways of doing the work of a minister. God does his work in an ordered fashion. There was nothing haphazard about the ministry of Jesus. There are correct methods to be employed, the right tools to use, wise plans to follow; but the most important, and determining, will be the man who uses them.

There is a gospel according to you.

"As the Father hath sent me [into the world], even so send I you."

It is almost frightening to find ourselves at all in the succession of those sent forth by the Master to minister to men. Perhaps we say, "It is too high for me; I cannot attain unto it." Yet that is just where we need to begin. We must elevate our ideal, and our every thought of our task,

until we find ourselves crying out in despair, "Who is sufficient for these things? It cannot possibly be I." If our pastoral ministry is something we are too sure about, then it is not for us, and we will never make anything out of it.

II

This One Thing I Do

"THIS ONE THING I DO!" IF OUR TASK WERE ONLY as simple as that! There is not one thing; there are a hundred things to do. Anything as comprehensive as the Christian ministry could not fail to be a demanding task. Our work deals with life, and is as wide as life itself. Other professions are by their nature limited. The doctor deals with the body, the lawyer with legal matters, the merchant with trade, the teacher with education, the politician with public affairs. Not one of these, of course, is wholly confined to his own particular sphere, but neither does his task include quite so much as the task of the minister. His work reaches out to include something of almost everybody's task. It seems as if he would be the last person who could rightly say, "This one thing I do."

But he had better learn to say it. If not, he may find himself doing so many things that he is not really doing even one thing.

First, it will be necessary for us to come to some sort of decision about the relation of our life and work to the community about us. Our church is not a thing apart. Participation in com-

munity efforts is inevitable. Community agencies will expect our assistance, and ought to have it. In rural centers 4-H Clubs, Granges, schools, co-operative movements, and in the city Y.M.C.A., civic organizations, Boy Scouts, welfare agencies, etc., will all seek our help, and afford an opportunity for a wide ministry.

Active participation in public affairs often becomes more acute for a minister in a small community, just as it is more difficult for a minister in a small church to regulate his activities within his church than it is for a minister in a large church. In a large church there is more lay leadership to share and lighten the minister's responsibilities. In a small church, if the pastor does not do certain things they will remain undone. In a small town this is true too about community activities. In a situation in which a city minister may readily say "No" as to community activity, the small-town minister may have to say "Yes," or a necessary community service will go undone. I know a minister in a small town who has for several years been county chairman of the Red Cross. He has a small church, well organized, its membership faithful and loyal. There is not much prospect for denominational growth. He has time for wider service. This he wisely undertook to render. He tripled the county membership in the Red Cross, and broadened his own ministry immeasurably. He is the best-known and best-loved minister in the county. There seemed no one else

to do this work. This minister did it, and somehow managed to make a pastoral task out of it too, for many more than those of his own little group.

Always our community relationships require some co-operation with others in community movements. Some of these movements may not be religious other than in their effects. It would seem to be plain that a minister can have no part in partisanship action, and that he should be particularly on guard against activities in politics. One of the greatest dangers in community participation is in the tendency to become a community dissenter. A far greater influence in civic affairs is wielded by seeking to commend rather than to condemn. Condemnation in public affairs helps not at all, while constructive criticism is hard to shake off. I was once a member of a ministerial association which met each Monday morning, and whose first consideration each week seemed to be, "What can we protest against this morning?" I cannot recall that anybody ever listened to anything we had to say.

The matter of community activity is a vexing question. It is my personal observation and experience, through years of sharing in many activities outside of my own church, that all of one's community relationships are only auxiliary to the task that centers on the corner where one's church is located. Whatever I do, I must enrich my ministry there. There I have a fold and a flock. I am first of all their shepherd. It is beyond

all doubt a help to be respected and favorably known by many throughout the community. The pastures are broad and there are "other sheep." But too often, when we leave our "ninety and nine," it is not that we are truly seeking the wandering sheep. And I trust that it remains just a ministerial secret as to how many times our public activity is a matter of our unworthy and unprofitable bowing before the false gods of personal popularity.

If there is to be a narrowing down of our ministry in the face of the many demands upon our time and energy, it is likewise true in regard to the content of our message and work. For we must come to some clear decision too as to how much of our ministry shall apply itself to the social structure of the life about us. We are prone to characterize our time in generalizing words. So we speak of it as a materialistic, a scientific, or a machine age. Certainly no such characterizing word can be wholly inclusive. But to say that our age is a social age would indicate, at least, one of the chief developments of the past century, and one that has left its mark upon the work and message of the Christian church.

Is the gospel a social or an individual gospel? There are, of course, extremes of emphasis here. There are those for whom anything that smacks of a social gospel is anathema. They are afraid of the very term as of a plague. They do not countenance any mention of Christian social action

from the pulpit or in the councils of the church. There are others who have no other text whatever. For them the pulpit is often merely a forum for the discussion of social action, and the church an agency of social reform.

An average minister, however, finds himself somewhere between these two extremes. He is aware that the redemption of the individual is essential, but that society must be redeemed too.

One thing is certain—that our task is to be a challenge to life. We are to declare unto men that they must be born again. But what for? That they may be new creatures; that they may live a new life. And a new life must necessarily change the conditions under which it is lived. In Thessalonica they said of Paul and Silas, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” Our gospel has lost some of its first meaning if it is not revolutionary. It changes things.

Everything needed changing in Jesus’ day. And Jesus was aware of it. He wept over Jerusalem. He said that its leadership was rotten at the core, that the poor were in rags and want, that hunger and disease stalked through the hovels of the wretched. He approved of charity. The disciples had a treasury for the poor. He healed the sick. He denounced the practices of the rich, the self-centered, and the hard of heart. Neither his hands nor his heart were closed to the wretchedness of men about him. He believed in a better world. He pictured the kind of world God wants. He called

it the Kingdom of God. He prayed for it. We cannot doubt that Jesus would approve of every modern social organization for the betterment of life, and every bit of legislation for the restraint of social evils.

In the sixteenth century, the Reformation, as we know, changed the basis of religious authority from the church to the Bible. As Protestants we stake our faith on the revelation of the Book, not on the councils of Rome. That being true, the immediate task of the sixteenth century in Protestant circles was some clear statement of what the Bible taught. So there followed the years of the forming of theological creeds and systematized statements of faith. The church naturally became theologically minded. Now, no fault can be found with that. We must know, in an ordered, systematic way, what the Book tells us about God. Every branch of the Protestant church has a creed; if not a written one, there is necessarily some inner agreement as to a common truth binding that group together as a denomination. Theological formulas are imperative.

Accompanying this emphasis upon faith was the abandonment of everything in practice and form that had been a part of the Roman church. And for more than three centuries we have been under that Reformation influence. It is only recently that there has been an appreciable recovery, in Protestant circles in America, at least, from the blighting effect of the sweeping aside of every-

thing formal and liturgical in worship. For long years the church was just a "meeting house." Every formalism of worship was taboo. My own Dutch forebears put a rooster on their church steeples as a substitute for the cross. We abandoned even the central symbol of our faith. All that is happily changing.

But the sixteenth-century influence of allegiance to a creed and a theological system lingered long too. The immediate necessity for a theological system turned out to be a limiting purpose in Protestantism, so that quite generally our emphasis has always been on correct statement of belief. The effect of this emphasis is seen in the presence of many denominations. They were the inevitable outcome of a stress upon theological formula. And beyond all doubt one of the present weaknesses of Protestantism is in the average church member's conception that he is a Christian when he has given his assent to a certain form of Christian belief. The effect of this, moreover, is seen in a long-delayed following out of the implications of our faith on our social structure. Martin Luther first neglected to follow out the implications of his faith when he turned against the peasants asking him to demand with them some of the elementary human rights and social privileges implied in the new religious freedom he proclaimed. What had his new form of faith to do with these! Luther's primary interest apparently was the acceptance of his theological system. To

a great degree this has been one of the determining influences of the Reformation movement, and has shaped the thought and the purpose of the Protestant church. In its preoccupation with systems of faith it has strongly emphasized the redemption of the individual and neglected the social redemption of society.

Current history reveals a widespread revolt against the church where it has wrapped about itself a cloak of oblivion to human misery: The Roman church has suffered thus in Spain and Mexico. Finding no fellowship, no sympathy, no intelligent guidance in facing the real problems of life, finding the church not only wrapped up in its own interests, but associated in their minds will those exploiting them, the people turned against it. The church in Russia brought about its own doom through a complete indifference to the common life of the Russian people. They saw no power or life in the church; so they brushed it aside. In Germany, where the church suffers under heavy civic disabilities, that very fact goes back to the surrender by the church itself of many social activities to the State. The church was concerned primarily with the formulas of Christian truth. All the social implications of the gospel it left to the government. How natural for the State when it becomes totalitarian to enlarge upon what the church has already left to it and to seek to include the entire church within its province! Our modern day has ample illustration of the fact

that institutionalism, formalism, sectarianism, vested interests, and even a well-meaning other-worldliness are ways to separateness from the lives of people whom the church is destined to serve, and that when the church fails to bring to bear its spiritual resources upon the pressing daily problems of life, it sows the seeds of its own decay.

Life does not exist for the sake of religion. It is religion that exists for the sake of life. We must believe that whatever touches life touches the church. The church cannot ignore the life and the conditions of life about it as if these are things apart. And they are wrong who would keep the church a private enterprise when it was meant to be the advance guard of the Kingdom of God in this world. There is no excuse for the church if it is organized just for itself. How can there be a gospel that ends with the individual? No man lives in this world as an individual. The gospel that has no social implications is not a gospel, for the gospel began with One who said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

No man is long a minister before he is aware in his own heart of wrongs that must be righted and evils that must be attacked. He sees that legislation must be enacted, common action must be aroused, moral safeguards must be erected, character-forming agencies must be supported, and philanthropic work must be done, or much of his preaching is in vain. There is a constant inner urge to do something about it. Just to preach seems not to be enough. The structure of life about him lies heavy in his heart. From within his own soul there is no contentment with things as they are. If there is, he had better question his call to be a minister of Jesus Christ.

And with the inner promptings of our own spirits, there are the many demands from without for definite social action. Every agency and movement for betterment looks to the minister. Civic officials seek his help. Reform movements want his leadership. Almost every mail brings some appeal for support and for action. Everybody else seems convinced that the church and the minister are in the business of social action. The minister is besieged to do something about things as they are, that they may be better than they are.

But what are we to do? We cannot do everything that is demanded of us. Granted that we must do something, what is that we are to do, and how much of our ministry must be concerned with social betterment?

It must be noted that the Book of our religion

gives no details for social action. Jesus, instead of giving a program of restraint against privilege and power, says, "Beware of covetousness." Our responsibility for the distressed and needy he covers with the story of the good Samaritan and the simple injunction, "Go, and do thou likewise." When he touches the question of the woman of the streets, we hear him say, "Go, and sin no more." Jesus meets a grafting ward heeler like Zacchaeus and visits with him in his own home. When we come to the prophets of the Old Testament, we find them preachers of righteousness, denouncing corruption, and putting their finger upon community sores and declaring that God would not have it so. But neither the prophets, nor He who was more than a prophet, ever offer a detailed program of social action.

There is, however, in the Bible every motive for social action; and we would do better to add some method than, in stifling literalism, to abandon all method and program, and with it the very spirit of him "who went about doing good."

Our danger here is one of confusion as to what to do and how to do it, unless we face a few fundamental considerations. Some men have gone "all out" for social action, and have identified themselves with movements that absorbed too much of their time. Others have gotten so far in the lead in socialistic endeavor that they have ended in a final retreat from the ministry altogether.

It will be helpful to remember that we are not experts in the field of social action. We are not economists, nor lawmakers, nor businessmen, nor welfare workers, nor politicians, nor judges, nor even reformers. We are ministers, and where leadership is necessary for needed social changes, others are technically better equipped than we are. If the present economic setup is wrong, it will take an economist to do something about it. Most of us cannot manage our own finances any too well. What the social leadership needs is Christian motivation. Every social program to be effective must be motivated by the Christian spirit and undergirded by a Christian faith. That is a task great enough to engage all our energies.

Furthermore, every social movement needs Christian public opinion behind it. Strong moral principles must be behind a new social order. The Prohibition experiment failed because it lacked a Christianized social conviction even among Christian people. No legislation or law is worth more than the public opinion behind it. A professor of political science, speaking to our Men's Club, affirmed that the only task of a politician is to follow public opinion. He said that it mattered little after all who was in office, as the officeholder is only the man to do what the people have decided they want done. And that is not belittling the politician. So little gets done because the people do not know what they want. Someone is needed to quicken a moral social consciousness,

to challenge men and women to want, and to work for, the kind of world God means us to have.

Our best contribution is to be a prophet of the new order, to create a new motive, to insist upon the pattern that God has laid down for the best life of men living together. We have a textbook as rich in socialized truth as it is in theological truth. Its gospel proclaims the service of the weak by the strong, of the poor by the rich, that the brotherhood of man is a parallel truth to the fatherhood of God, and that to be a pagan toward the one is to be a pagan toward the other. What bedrock convictions the average man has about those things will make or break any social effort. Who better than the minister can help to formulate Christian social opinion? What he can best do, if would seem, he ought to concentrate on doing. We are not experts in social leadership, but the experts are impotent without the Christianized convictions behind them which it is our business to create.

Furthermore, many efforts fail because of a blind faith in the sufficiency of external conditions and changes. It needs to be said by someone that better hours of work and wages will not provide a millennium, that material abundance has not led to the mastery of all human problems. A physically hungry man may not have much appetite for spiritual food, but a man with a full stomach is not any nearer the Kingdom for that. No new world is going to be built out of any of

the ingeniously devised prefabricated materials of our machine age. It still needs the bricks and the straw of the age-old Sermon on the Mount. Who ought to be certain of that if not we?

The social gospel must claim our attention. But there are limitations for us. There is one thing we must do. And perhaps the whole situation for us can be most adequately met if we will remember that the one thing for us is, by God's help, to seek to develop a social consciousness, not to create a social system.

III

An Understanding Heart

I LIKE THE WORD "MINISTER." JESUS USED IT ABOUT himself. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He also used the word "shepherd." "I am the good shepherd." Our word "pastor" conveys the same meaning. A pastor is a ministering shepherd. He must tend all of the flock, and in every flock there are those who need tender care—the sick, the troubled, the sorrowing, and the bereaved. They need the ministry of an understanding heart such as the first minister of burdened souls possessed.

It is no criticism of any seminary training to say that it does not school a minister for this phase of his service. It is not uncommon for young men about to enter their first charge to be apprehensive about their lack of preparation for ministering to the troubled. If ever there is a too confident self-assurance, it is not at this point. Usually a young man begins his work with something of dread about his ministering to others in times of sickness, sorrow, and stress.

No study could adequately prepare a man for this. What a man needs here first of all is a sympathetic, understanding heart. And his capacity for

sympathy and understanding develops, not from a theoretical approach, but from actual contact with suffering, troubled, and sorrowing persons. Sympathy and understanding come to a minister as they come to a physician. As a medical student the physician studies theory. He may be even a little calloused in his attitudes, but it all begins to mean something different as in his internship he touches people's lives, and even more so as later a patient is entrusted entirely to his care. And more and more through the years the good doctor learns that his knowledge, skill, and technique are supplemented, and made effective, by his understanding and feeling toward patients as persons. Heart, hand, and head together make a good physician. And the minister, like the physician, will grow in sympathy and understanding as the needs of men reach out to lay hold upon his heart.

A pastor's place in the hearts of his people is greatly determined by his ministry of comfort. There are always some into whose lives distress has come, and in faithful ministry to these over a number of years a minister reaches the larger number of his congregation at a time when, because of their sense of need, they are most receptive. The door to people's hearts is always ajar during their times of trouble, anxiety, and sorrow, and the minister can enter in, bringing his Christ with him in a way that he cannot do at any other time. The only opportunity comparable

to it is at the opposite extreme of experience. To share another's supreme joy is to come close to his inner life too. The Book of Proverbs declares: "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." But in both bitterness and joy the minister has an opportunity to get in behind the normal barriers to the human heart; and when he is no longer a stranger, there his true ministry begins. That minister is wise who remembers how largely all the effectiveness of his ministry to his people will be shaped by the touch of his own heart upon theirs at a time when they are wistfully sensitive to his sympathetic words and deeds.

The Lord Jesus earned the name of the Great Physician. He was always concerned with people who were sick in body as well as those who were sick in spirit. Those who minister in his name must be interested too. Whatever pastoral functions are omitted or neglected, it should never be this one of ministering to those ill in body. People want their pastor in times of illness, suffering, and anxiety; and he touches then, not only the individual, but the family and the community of friends. Here is a task which requires delicacy of feeling and the depths of understanding and imagination.

There are three purposes of a minister's care of the sick—the expression of sympathy, spiritual counsel, and a ministry of actual healing of the body through helpfulness in mental attitudes.

These are not necessarily distinct and separate from each other. A visit in which sincere sympathy is manifest may serve all three purposes. I am inclined to feel that just the call itself may serve these three ends without too much conscious stress on either one. In a sickroom we should above all be natural, and be calm and possessed in our bearing despite any seriousness in the situation confronted. Because the situation presents a spiritual opportunity, it does not follow that this is a time for any long spiritual diagnosis or discussion. The patient knows that you have come as his pastor. Sometimes things not said strike home more truly than any glib words. A prayer of trust and gratitude and recognition of God's mercy, forgiveness, and tenderness of understanding will often do what direct words do not. A sense of reality about God can be manifested without being unduly serious. And lightness of mind or trivialities have no place here even if the illness is not of a critical nature. But smiles and laughter may, upon proper occasion, not be out of place either. The matter of prayer should not be forced. For a minister to say that he never makes a sick call without offering prayer may be an indication of a practice comforting to the minister's own estimate of his duty, but not necessarily anything of helpfulness to the sick one. The emotional condition of the patient may be such that a word in parting that he will be remembered in prayer is far more helpful than

a prayer spoken at his bedside. It is well for us to remember that our call is, or ought to be, for the purpose of helpfulness to the sick one and his family, not to carry out some unvarying practice of ministerial procedure.

Sickbed resolutions or confessions should not be overemphasized. Dr. J. R. Miller, author of many devotional writings, and who had a very conspicuous ministry to the sick in a great Philadelphia pastorate, has stated that he never knew a case of "deathbed repentance" which lasted when the patient recovered. The remark of one sick man to his long-time enemy is unfortunately all too typical. His visitor was a man with whom he had had a lifetime controversy. But at the bedside the two were reconciled and words of friendship passed between them. Then, as the visitor was leaving, his reconciled sick antagonist called out, "Remember, if I get well this don't count."

A helpful spiritual service may be rendered through suggested reading or leaving books of inspiration with convalescing patients or those not too ill to read. Such books as Russell L. Dicks's *Meditations for the Sick* and E. Stanley Jones's *Christ and Human Suffering* carry a message of strength for a time of spiritual sensitiveness and need. The minister will, of course, not neglect the reading of the Word as appropriate occasions present themselves.

In a ministry of sympathy and helpfulness, one must be ready to meet unusual circumstances.

Sometimes one's presence is a sustaining strength to loved ones as they await the outcome of an operation. They may ask their pastor to be with them in such a time, or he, knowing some special circumstance, may offer to be with them then. One cannot always foresee the way in which it is possible to be most helpful. On one occasion a friend from a former pastorate came to Louisville for a major operation upon his wife. She was a member of the church. He was reared a Catholic and remained formally in that church because one of his sisters was a nun. Both of them were close personal friends of mine. Upon my joining him on the morning of the operation, and as his wife was being wheeled into the operating room, he asked me if I were not going into the operating room also. Turning to him I said, "Do you mean that you want me to go into the operating room instead of waiting here with you?" He feelingly replied, "Yes." To which I answered, "Well, I came here to help you, and if that does it I'll go in." And so I did.

Unusual circumstances present themselves when the minister is not alone with a patient. It may be necessary then to place himself tactfully in the position of taking charge of the situation, at least for a few moments of devotion, when that is in order. And this is not always easily done, nor does it always result in a situation very favorable to devotion. I recall visiting an elderly lady in the hospital who had as her visitor an old friend

of long standing. Both of them were old enough to be living in the past, and especially the visitor, from whose reminiscences as to her family I had long suffered. She could start in the middle of her family pedigree and go in both directions at the same time. This afternoon she was engaged in her usual conversational parade of her ancestors, and I was at a loss as to how to stop her and to conclude my visit with a prayer for the sick woman before I left. After about thirty minutes I stood up by the bed waiting for an opportunity to break in with my prayer. After some minutes of a still uninterruptable flow of ancient history, the patient herself broke in with the remark, "Annie, you keep still a minute. Dr. Pleune is waiting to pray, and that will do me more good than hearing about your family." After which I had to begin to pray! When I had concluded, the patient quietly said to her friend, "All right, Annie, you can go ahead now." I do not know what my visit did for them. But it surely revived their minister.

There will be those who are ill for a long time, and those shut in on account of age and infirmity. Their burden is that they are shut off from activity and usefulness. An understanding heart will recognize how much may be brought into their lives through periodic visits of their minister, in which they may be led to feel that they are still a part of the Lord's work and that their sustaining prayers are a bulwark to their minister's

strength. A home service of the Lord's Supper on the afternoon of Communion Sunday always means much to those kept from their church. There is a special inclusiveness felt if this is done on the same Sunday that the rest of the congregation has gathered about the table of the Lord. When one or more elders accompany the minister there is created both an opportunity of helpfulness on their part and an increase of the sense of church fellowship in those for whom this ministry is rendered.

A minister's understanding heart will embrace the material wants of some of his people. In a church of most comfortably situated people there will still be some who are poor and need assistance and sympathetic fellowship, and often material aid. Not only did Jesus say to the emissaries of John the Baptist who asked if he were indeed the Christ, "Go tell John what things ye have seen and heard; to the poor the gospel is preached," but among the Twelve there was the bag from which the poor were served. Many churches designate the Communion Sunday offering for this special cause. The minister should instruct his people about this brotherly charity. It is understood that few should know about the distribution of such funds. The minister should be unrestricted in his withdrawals from the fund, whether or not he actually has them in charge. This whole matter of charity is difficult because of the modern complex social structure of our

community life and the care of the poor being increasingly handled by the state or the municipality. And it all requires delicate handling because some of the most needy and most worthy will be the most shrinking in making their needs known and the most embarrassed in receiving aid.

Nothing, however, so reaches a true minister's own heart as other hearts that are broken or bowed by grief. There is sickness of heart over the wrongdoing of a loved one. Shame and pride join in a withdrawal that often makes such situations hard to reach. Often all the minister can do is to loyally stand by. Frequently there is nothing one can do or say; but there is always the voiceless sympathetic understanding that leaps from a sincere heart to another in a trouble of which neither speaks, yet each knows how deeply the other feels.

After years of service most ministers are aware of the overwhelming need of comfort among their people. John Watson, who wrote under the name of Ian Maclaren, said in his later years, "If I had my ministry to live over again I would preach more comfort." The ministry of comfort is a great and constantly needed ministry. As Tennyson said,

Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

When death comes there is no duty whatsoever that should stand in the way of a pastor reaching,

as quickly as possible, those who have been bereaved. It means much to them to feel that nothing else took precedence over their need.

It is unquestioned that our sympathy must be genuine. No method of approach can take the place of genuineness of heart. All sense of professionalism must be absent from one's manner and from one's heart. This ministry is never easy. And it is utterly impossible if we are not truly affected by the other's grief. Job said, "If your soul were in my soul's stead." We must put ourselves in their place, as if this someone were our own.

When sorrow comes, the soul, or the family of souls, is ready for a spiritual pilgrimage. They may not be aware of it. They may seem even to be rebellious. Some stricken ones feel that they have been singled out for misfortune. Some through their tears demand an answer to their insistent, Why? Why? What an opportunity then comes to the preacher! People never forget what you do then. And the strangest part of it is that the best thing is not to try to do too much. The first time a young minister meets this situation he is apt to ask himself, "What shall I say? What shall I say?" Bless you, my brother, don't ever try to say very much, and most of the time say nothing at all. The curse of our ministry of comfort is words. Jesus, about to call Lazarus from the grave, did not talk about it. "Jesus wept." A handclasp may speak volumes. Every minister has

learned this surely: that when someone, after a service, comes with a flood of words about what a wonderful sermon it was, it often leaves him cold. (Or are you still susceptible to that?) Then someone else just takes you by the hand and presses it a bit as he looks you in the face, but says not a word, and you feel a glow of heart that perhaps in your message you did truly help someone that day.

We do not have to say much. Often the best thing we can do is to listen. Shakespeare says,

Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.

Most people find comfort in speaking of an absent loved one to another sympathetic heart. And the minister ought to be that one. I learned that one day long ago when, under circumstances that were terrible, a young husband in my church was massacred in San Domingo. The details were horrible. The young wife was left with a baby born just before her husband left on his engineering job. His body was burned under vicious circumstances in that distant land after a brutality of torture beyond description. What could I say to that young mother? I went to her. She was all alone in her home. I do not recall how we began to talk, but I had known them both quite well, and had visited them just before he had left on this ill-fated journey. So she began to talk about

him. And I stayed all afternoon as she spoke of him and their life together, sometimes pausing to take care of the baby—his child—in her crib. I said very little, and left feeling that I had ministered to her not at all. But the next day her sister came to me to report, with glistening eyes, that the stricken mother had said what a wonderful comfort I had been to her because, said she, “He had sense enough to let me talk.” Well, it wasn’t a conscious sense on my part that afternoon, but I have always tried to be that sensible since.

We cannot hope to explain the ways of God. Sorrow and suffering are not always punitive. And it is cruel ever to even hint that this sorrow may have come to save from some worse sorrow or pain in the future. They are facing a present burden of grief, not some imaginary one of the future. Theology has its place, but rarely in any circumstance of grief. And idle explanations of the mysteries of God have no part at all. It is more comforting by far, with your own tears answering theirs, to say, “I do not know why.” If we are to say anything at all by way of explanation, it may be by way of the fatherhood of God, drawing an analogy from our own parenthood with its love and its care for our own children. Our children too ask questions. We tell them that someday they will understand. They must often be bewildered also by our dealing with them. Sometimes we have to say “No,” sometimes re-

strain and rebuke them. We cannot do otherwise, for they have, as yet, so little experience with life. We know that it is hard for them; still the passionate desire of our hearts as human parents is that, if our children do not understand, they will yet trust us and will feel that we love them beyond all telling. Well, we are all God's little children asking "Why?" in our utterly inadequate experience of all of life in God's great outreaching world. The Eternal Father can no more make all his dealings with us clear to us than we can with our children. And, assuredly, what he passionately wants from us is the same trust and awareness of his fatherly love and care that we want in the hearts of our children. What God wants is that we love and trust him still. He understands our tears, our sense of bewilderment, even our demanding "Why?" All that he asks of us, as his children, is what we want from our own.

No ministry of comfort can end with a formal funeral service. The emptiness and loneliness come heaviest when the formalities of grief are ended. Let a minister seek out the sorrowing ones in the days that follow. Sometimes the practice of calling a week after the funeral, on the very day, may be followed. That is a hard day. That you remembered it means much. The first Christmas season, with the home so different, and other homes all bright and glad, is always difficult. Your remembrance of them with a Christmas message of sympathy and recognition will be a blessing of

comfort. Whatever one does by way of special remembrance will, of course, bind sorrowing hearts to you in enduring bonds of friendship and appreciation; but, what is more, it will also help to bind them to the Lord of all comfort, as they come to know that it is not just your warm, kindly personality expressing itself, but that you are representing him without whom all hearts are empty.

An understanding heart! That is the glory of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as given to us in the gospel story. How thoughtful and understanding and considerate Jesus was! How little his words would mean apart from his great understanding, sympathetic actions!

Here is a little prayer that might be said by all of us who seek to minister in his name. It is from the pen of "Dick" (H. R. L.) Sheppard, in his book *Some of My Religion*.

Give me grace today not to pass by suffering without some understanding and desire to help. Guard my lips from the clumsy speech that does not comprehend, and give me more wisdom, more understanding, more strong tenderness, and the power to help.¹

¹ Harper & Bros., 1936, p. 72.

IV

Ringin' Doorbells

TODAY WHEN WE RING A DOORBELL IT IS QUITE LIKELY that it isn't a bell at all that sounds, but a gong or a set of chimes. The old-fashioned doorbell may be gone, but the wisdom and the necessity of the minister standing before the door of his people's homes seeking to come in for the purpose of an intimate and personalized ministry has not changed at all.

It is well at the outset of one's ministry to establish a conviction as to the importance of calling upon one's people. There are many things in the ministry the actual effectiveness of which it is difficult to check. And calling is surely one of them. I have often questioned the wisdom of spending as much time in calling upon people as I have given to it. There are times when it all seems rather petty. And it takes so much time. There are so many other things to be done, and we go about ringin' doorbells! Often it seems as if it is just one of those things a minister has always done, and, for all the results which are evident, nothing would be changed if we had enough courage to quit the whole thing and give our time to something else. Yet every minister

could probably testify to the unmistakable fact that when he neglects this part of his work everything about his ministry suffers. There seems to be a very definite relation between a successful ministry and this act of ringing doorbells.

It would help every minister to remember that he is peculiarly a pastor of families, not just individuals. Some denominations list their members as families. Some record of individual members is kept, of course, but a church is listed as having so many families. It keeps the idea of the family uppermost. We sometimes forget that the strength of Christianity is not in the church, but in the home. The home does not exist for the sake of the church, but the church for the sake of the home. The purpose of the church school should be to help the home in the training of children in Christian living, not to take over the task of parents. If this be at all true, the place of the minister's service is in the home fully as much as in the pulpit.

Every congregation wishes its minister to be a pastor. In the New Testament the word "pastor" is synonymous with shepherd. Jesus, speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd, said, "I know my sheep. . . . A stranger will they not follow." A modern flock wants no stranger shepherd. Even as to our preaching it will be most effective upon people whom we know and who know us. It is quite true that the man who is in-

visible during the week is likely to be incomprehensible on Sunday.

Many of our contacts with people will be social in their nature, and for the purpose of the deepening of friendship. Every visit need not be strictly religious. We are human, or ought to be, and it is quite certain that many of our people want to know us as men as well as ministers.

How about prayer on such calls? I recall one experience that has always helped me, both in my thought of a minister's personal relationship with his people, and this matter of prayer. One summer a family from my congregation, with some friends of theirs, rented a cottage next to our summer place for a period of two weeks. We fished and loafed and played together. I had been their minister for some three years at the time and thought that they knew me fairly well, and was surprised to have them feelingly express their gratitude for this opportunity of knowing their minister better. Then the last evening we had a beach party, roasting marshmallows, playing games, and singing the old familiar songs. Before we broke up someone suggested that we ought to end with a prayer, for it was our last gathering together as a group. I had not thought of that at all; but at once, for everyone, it seemed a most appropriate thing to do. So a prayer was offered, and the memory of that evening has always remained with me as an example of an appropriate time to pray when the minister himself had not

been sensitive to it. We should, of course, be careful not to force prayer into our social contacts, but it may often be far more appropriate in the mind and heart of our people than it is in our own. Certainly there should be nothing in our social call that should make prayer out of place.

We will do little calling unless we are systematic about it. Some time must be reserved irrevocably for calling and definite plans made to carry it out, or other things will crowd our calling from our schedule. It will often seem a task to which we must drive ourselves. That ought not to disturb us unduly. Some authors say that they have to drive themselves to the task of writing. The mechanics of it are perfect drudgery to them. We may not be able to detect it in the results of their work at all, and it is a surprise to us to hear them say that they find their task a burden. I can testify that, with all my deep conviction about the absolute necessity of calling on my people, I still, after many years, have to drive myself to it. There is not an afternoon set aside for calls but that I can think of a dozen reasons why it is not necessary to make them at that particular time. When I have made my first call I find it easy to continue and I truly enjoy it, but it never fails to be a hard thing to get started. This is one of the many things we need to plan to do even when we do not feel like it.

Calls may be reasonably brief. They would naturally be longer in a country parish or a town

than in a city, and circumstances will control here as in so many things about our work. Every purpose of a call is defeated, however, if it is so brief as to seem casual or hurried. I know of a minister who complained that another minister calling upon him was in such a hurry, and had spoken of the many things he had to do and the many calls he had to make, and in a few minutes was gone. If a minister, who for himself knows a pastor's task, could be sensitive at a hurried call and gain the impression that he is just a name on a list to be checked off as hurriedly as possible, what must be the effect upon the average church member? Ten calls are not necessarily ten times as effective as one. And no call should be made just for the sake of making one more call.

We ought to be interested in the home and manifest that interest. Anniversaries, when known, the building of a new home, or even a change of address, provide opportunities for calls that show interest in that home as a home.

Calls at offices and places of business of our men are usually greatly appreciated. It is often the only way we can see the men of our congregation. Wisdom must be exercised, of course, and here a call may well be brief if the businessman is busy; but frequently they are anxious to give the minister time and to show him about their place of business. That manifestly is a help toward knowing our man, and toward humanizing his conception of his minister. There can be little

question of the value of this kind of calling. Some businessmen may be surprised at having their minister walk into their place of business. They may wonder what he wants now. But any feeling of surprise is supplanted by a glow of appreciation when they find that he is just making a call as man to man. The most favorable result upon the businessman, however, is not comparable to the effect upon the minister himself of knowing something of his men at their daily task.

Prospective members will engage some of our time in calling upon them. The minister, however, should have the help of some of his members in contacting prospective members. Calls upon them other than by the pastor are usually necessary. Calling committees are quite willing to make some calls upon new people, especially upon those who have manifested some interest in the church. Some ministers have been unusually effective in organizing groups for personal work and making personal calls, but this remains especially a task for the pastor. I know of no case under my observation where, though a minister has succeeded in getting effective work done by some calling committee, he himself is not the key person after all in these contacts. Church members should help, and their work is invaluable, but the minister's part cannot be delegated to anyone else.

There are some people who must be called on not because of any particular need, other than that a call acts as a prod in their careless church re-

lationship. The church has its share of delinquent members. David Harum, speaking about his church membership, remarked, "The one I stay away from, when I *don't* go, 's the Prespyterium." Every minister has those whose membership is like that. What these people need is occasional personal contact. It ought not to be necessary, but it is. They seem to be built that way. Sustained interest does not seem to be a part of their make-up. If we can improve their attendance and relation to the church by calling upon them occasionally, why not do it? It is a part of our task. Dr. Charles E. Jefferson remarked that if one person should drop away from the church each month without being noticed, that would make twelve in a year, and it would startle us if twelve people should drop away at the same time, yet one by one is just as tragic. Very often a little personal attention by the minister would prevent it.

There are some who become disaffected. They are easily hurt. The fault may be theirs and not ours, but it is surprising how many times a call made without any reference to their hurt feelings at all smooths all difficulty away. The importance of pastoral attention is evident from the reaction of some of those for whose laxness we are in no way responsible. Despite everything we do, they at last seem to drop away and we see nothing of them. They make no response to the church whatsoever. Perhaps then we reluctantly give them up, for we cannot forever spend our time upon those

who seemingly want nothing so much as to be left alone. Then someday they make as their excuse that the minister has not called upon them. It is their self-satisfying excuse for their own failure, but their inevitable placing of the blame upon us reveals an instinctive sense of the value of the pastoral relation. They always put their finger upon that.

Dr. F. W. Boreham writes of those whose doorbells we may not have been meant to ring. None of us can adequately serve everyone. Someone else may be able to minister to them, but not we. Jesus himself could not satisfy everyone, nor can we. We need not break our heart over our failure with some member if, in the spirit of the Master, we have truly given our heart to our task.

As about so many things in a pastor's work, our visitation calling requires patience and steadfastness. There is little about our task that is like adding one and one to make two. Calling is a matter of establishing relationships, of personalizing our ministry, of breaking down the distance between pulpit and pew, of creating a medium of understanding and interest that makes for reality in both the presenting of our truth and the receiving of it. It is difficult, therefore, to put one's finger upon results. One can never say this much calling will produce this much return. There can be nothing mathematical about it all, except that if this is not one of the basic investments of some of our time and effort our

work will add up to very little. Timetables and evaluating scales have little place in a pastor's work. The one thing we can be sure of about visitation calling is that it is folly to neglect it.

Every minister is sometimes aware that his calling affects the success of his efforts in unaccountable ways. He may, for instance, have a list of prospective members upon whom he calls without much response. None of them seems ready to become a member. But some other people whom he did not personally contact through calling voluntarily express their desire to join the church. It is easy then for the minister to say to himself, "What is the use of calling? Why not spend that time for other things?" But just let him try it that way! Let him give over calling entirely and these others to whom he gives little attention will not respond either. There are psychological and spiritual reasons for it into which one may probe if one will; but, in any event, let us remember that our calling often works after this manner. The thing we expect to happen may not come to pass; but, if we do not call at all, nothing happens.

No one can say how much calling is enough. Some men set a goal of so many calls a month. This undoubtedly is valuable as something of a spur, as all of us need some challenge to our lazy selves. Keeping a record against a set goal serves to check us up. A mental estimate of the number of calls made, like guessing at the attendance at a service, is always too flattering to ourselves. It is

well to have actual numbers to stare us down. But even the actual numbers are not necessarily a correct gage of effective calling. One hundred calls a month may mean much, or it may mean very little. Again mathematics plays no vital or conclusive part. If a certain number of calls is our goal, one may easily find it something of a satisfaction if there is no one at home, and a card may be left, and we are able to mark that down as one more call so that we can hurry on to the next. And it is not unknown for a minister thus to say under his breath, in the words of Elmer Blurp, "I hope nobody's home, I hope, I hope, I hope." A list of calls made is just a list after all. It is not a record of what is accomplished.

The one thing imperative is that we give ourselves conscientiously and devotedly to this phase of our ministry. We cannot read the gospel story of him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," without being impressed with his personal relationships. He touched all sorts of people. He was always giving himself to others. We read that he called the Twelve "that they should be with him." Their personal relationship with him was a part of their training and of their final commitment of themselves to him. The Twelve were often surprised at his wayside ministries. He was never too busy to meet people and to do something for them. Nothing was an interruption for him, and some of the greatest things he did were done on the way to doing something

else. No service and no demand were ever to him a routine or a burden. Jesus loved people. As his minister we must know people and love them too. Some of the ways to do it may often seem prosaic. And one of the ways is the ringing of doorbells. But if we do it faithfully and well, there will be an answering response in the hearts of men. And that is what calling is for.

Slow, Curve Ahead

A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY UPON OUR MODERN HIGHWAYS depends much upon the road signs. The highway numbers indicate the right road. But to be on the right road is not enough. There are also caution signs that must be heeded. Of these one of the most common is, "Slow, Curve Ahead."

A phrase much quoted a few years ago was, "Live dangerously." It has a proper challenge for us. We cannot be good ministers of such a one as the Lord Jesus Christ and always live easy, placid, safe lives. There are times when "safety first" is the refuge of a craven soul, and when only "safety last" will do. We cannot, however, abandon ourselves to a policy of recklessness. In life, as on the highway, right going is a matter of considered judgment. The wise procedure is to drive carefully. None of us has reached the point where all warning signs are unnecessary. We all learn best from our own experience. Nobody has ever improved upon the effectiveness of learning to profit by our own mistakes; but we need often to be reminded of our own experience, for it is easy to forget to remember. If mottoes in themselves were effective, this would be a good one to

issue with every seminary diploma, with the requirement that it be put above one's study desk: "Slow, Curve Ahead."

It is, of course, not for the young minister alone that the ministerial highway is marked with signs of caution. Prudence remains a virtue with which a minister must be on familiar terms until his work is done. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." None of us is ever any more than a beginner in his task.

When, however, we begin to think in terms of warning signs for a minister's task, it is hard to see the woods for the trees. There are so very many of them. Which ones shall we single out? How shall we generalize in a way that shall be constructively critical for us all? My choice of points at which to go slow is naturally not exclusive, for anyone else could easily choose many others.

Caution is indicated in the matter of our hurry, our impatience, our eagerness for results. It is peculiarly a warning for a young minister. He has been through a training in a body of truth and of method. He is prepared to use them, and to believe that if he is only diligent and faithful certain results will inevitably follow. Well do I remember my early efforts with a sermon on Sabbath observance, and after most careful preparation and exhaustive treatment and some zeal in presenting it, how surprised I was that it made no apparent change at all in the Sabbath habits

of my congregation. But we never quite get over our expecting too much too soon as a result of our labors. "The Impatience of a Parson" is something more than the title of a good book.

Danger lies ahead. Out of a too-eager expectancy of results are born worry and fret, nervous strain, criticism of others, a disproportionate sense of our own part, and even a lack of trust and faith in God.

Jesus gave us our clue, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It is too much to expect that we would be able to continue in our task without some fruit for our toil. It would be silly indeed to sow our seed with no thought of a harvest. But it is just as lacking in sense to expect the harvest to follow overnight.

Perhaps the thing that I am driving at here is really a matter of too great a trust in our own ability and our own methods. When these fail us, as often they do, the consequence is either a feverish activity to find some new method, or we are plunged into a mood of despair. Most of us must admit that, in looking for some final and sure return from some plan of ours, we have often failed to learn the lesson of our fruitless effort, and have only sought the more feverishly for some other human twist of the wrist to bring it about. If we could only hit upon the right stratagem all would still be well! So our ministry descends to the level of a frantic search for some new scheme that cannot fail. And if our failure

has not meant a further dependence on the very thing that made for lack of results, it is probable that we have lost ourselves in a blue funk over it all. And it is very easy to get God mixed up in this too, and to believe that, because we have failed, God has deserted us. I don't know a juniper tree when I see one, but like Elijah I have sat under one many a time.

And when things are not going according to our schedule, it is appallingly easy to find fault with somebody else for it. It is the cause of many a scolding sermon. And scolding sermons never did any good except to relieve the preacher's feelings. Our people suffer enough from our sermons without our using them as a vent for our peeves. I was once caught up short in this matter by my own child, who, having heard me preach a scolding sermon and noting some more fire in it than usual, said at the dinner table, "Daddy, you sure like to jump on 'em, don't you?" Hambone, the genial Negro philosopher, says, "Pahson 'low dat's de shepherd's job to shear de sheep—but 'tain' no need to skin 'em!" The method is suspect because there is just too much self-satisfaction in the process.

It does not make much difference whether our demand for quick returns is the cause or the effect of our lack of trust and confidence in God's methods; this is really the heart of it. We have been choosing God's time and God's ways for him. Our frustration comes because we have been

trying to hurry God. We have forgotten that it is not we but God who brings about the result. Whose work are we trying to do, his or ours? I believe that I know what an ideal day in his service should be for me. It is that I should begin it on my knees in earnest prayer for God's presence and guidance for the day, and that he might help me truly to give all of myself to his work. And after I have done this, I should go about my work with my dependence on him, counting on him, but with true diligence in every effort of my own. And finally, if I have done that, conscientiously given of my best, I should be able to go to my rest at night without fear or anxiety for the day, as I then leave every outcome of the day to him. He is the one that will have worked through me during the day or nothing will have come of it. So why not leave it all to him? Tomorrow is another day.

A second caution is in the matter of making an issue of things. It too is, perhaps, a warning peculiarly necessary to young men just beginning their ministry; but it is something to be heeded by us all, all along the way. We deal, of course, in issues of life and death. Matters of religion are vital for time and eternity. The church is the "Bride of Christ"; its purity must be protected. Questions and practices arise which cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Situations arrange themselves in a way that compels an adjustment of them. There are times when silence gives con-

sent, and we must speak out. All of which is true. There are issues which, if avoided, are as much of a denial of our Lord as was that of Peter in Pilate's courtyard. But the lines are rarely as sharply drawn for us as we think. Surely it would be a more peaceful world, especially in the church, if more of us were less sure that so frequently destiny hangs in the balance waiting our action. Generally what we choose to think of as an issue is what we have created ourselves, or so named, because we want so desperately to have a hand in doing something about it.

We ought to want to do something about many things. We ought not to be content with things as they are. There are many things in the lives of our people that ought to be different, as there are in our own lives. There are many things about our church that should be improved. There are official practices and official persons that could well be shaped anew. To be satisfied with the *status quo* is a mark of unfitness to be a minister at all. Our only hope to be a faithful minister of Christ is to hold his banner high, to march under it ourselves, and fearlessly challenge our people to go with us. But it is one thing to yearn for, and to work for, and to pray for those changes, and quite another to seek to force them by making an issue of them.

The zeal of youth often makes its most grievous errors just here. That might be expected and excused because of inexperience and one's theoretic-

cal preparation. But it is almost tragic to note how often this expectation is so fully and literally fulfilled. I have occasion to see and to receive reports about the work of young men beginning their ministerial careers. The most frequent criticism that comes to me is that they want to change everything, and do it right now. They make an issue of things that could be brought about to the satisfaction of everyone, including the Lord, if they would give them time. The other day a church officer asked if it might not be possible to teach the young men in the Seminary what he called a "give-and-take attitude toward the church officers." He liked and respected his young pastor, but he felt deeply that the young man's standing on an issue, and holding uncompromisingly to it, was a grave weakness. It is, of course, for any man. We may have our way by forcing it, but the true shepherd does not drive his sheep; he leads them.

A pressure that brooks no delay, or the very lack of it, may be a matter of personal temperament. If I may be pardoned for another personal allusion, I think that I have always been temperamentally unfitted to force an issue. And it used to worry me terribly. I wondered if I was not perhaps woefully weak-kneed about bearing down upon some things which seemed to require just that. I seriously questioned whether I was not something of a moral coward. But it does not bother me any more, and today I am grateful

that it is so. Thirty years of experience have given me an assurance that some of the best things that have come about in my ministry and pastoral work have been the result of the things I did not do. A case in point was an outbreak in an officers' meeting on the part of one man who spoke his mind forcibly and freely in opposition to some proposed action. It was not directed at me personally, though I could have taken it as such, for the proposal was one that I had made. He said that he was through and would leave the church if we voted what was proposed. We dropped the matter, though we considered it an important one. I felt that he had spoken in the heat of some personal feeling and had therefore overstated himself, as I have often done myself. So we did not refer to it then or later. The next day he met another officer on the street who had not been present the night before, and said to him, "Did you hear what a fool I made of myself last night?" A month or two later the proposed action was passed with his hearty support.

I once made the mistake of raising an issue with a member who wrote me an unfair letter. He was a doctor whose church membership centered in that of his wife. She was an active worker. The content of his letter does not matter, but it was critical. He had been unwisely approached in a building campaign. I never will cease regretting that I answered his letter calling his attention to what the church had done for him and his, and

turning the point of his criticism back upon himself. If I had ignored and forgotten it he might have done so too; but I made an issue of it, and he saw to it that his family broke connections with us entirely. I never had a chance to minister to any one of them again.

Slow! There is always a curve ahead in making an issue of anything. It can always be said that we must not compromise the Lord ever, but it usually turns out that the Lord had little to do with it.

Another slow spot for us ought to be in accepting the fiction that as ministers we are any different from anyone else. The old conception of the minister as a man utterly apart in manner and dress has happily disappeared from the thought of the public, and the minister as well. But he is still deferred to. I am just now spending a week at a delightful auto camp where I can do this writing without interruption. And everybody about the place seems to treat me a little differently because I am a minister. It is rather pleasant and perhaps will do me no harm, unless I begin to defer to myself. Paul says, "I say, . . . to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." It is a terribly easy thing to do, and it is not the least of the many things against which the minister must guard himself.

People do say nice things about us. Fortunately we do not hear all of the things they say. Kind words are always most pleasant sounds, and we

often need them; but we are done for just as soon as we begin to believe all that we hear. Courtesy and politeness toward us are not to be disparaged, but we need to keep our heads about ourselves. After every service some people say flattering things to us about the sermon. What do you expect them to say? They cannot every one of them make a remark about the weather. There is one form of ministerial discount that is always in order, and that is our own deductions of the praise that comes our way. If we do not know how little of it is deserved, we do not know enough about ourselves.

Still another place in which to go slow is in actually making an exception of ourselves. The fact that our ministry is concerned with the life of others puts us on the judge's bench when we ought be standing with others in the dock before the Judge of all. What concerns us about others should concern us about ourselves. Hornell Hart says that he was astounded one day to have his daughter say to him, "Father, do you know that you are an awful problem to me?" He says that he had so concentrated on the psychological problems of youth that it had never occurred to him that in the pattern of life for his own family he was not excepted as a problem.

A young woman said to her pastor: "You know, what I like about you is that in manner and in speech you do not set yourself off from us. I notice, for instance, that you never say 'you' but

always say 'we.' ” To which her pastor replied, “To tell you the truth, ‘I’ and ‘me’ give me so much trouble grammatically that I find it safer just to say ‘we.’ ” We do, of course, share all of life with our people, and the degree in which we manifest this both in manner and in speech will determine how far we can lead them. It is said that Father Damien one day began to use the words “we lepers.” He had discovered that he himself was a victim of the dread disease. And from the day he was able to say “we,” his ministry began to be truly fruitful.

If we begin to make exceptions of ourselves, there is no longer anything we can learn from our failures and the buffeting winds of adversity. There is a hymn which says,

Blest be the sorrow, kind the storm,
Which drive us nearer home.

Our great Atlantic liners have been in the habit of making record runs from European ports to New York City. Such records are, however, always made in fair weather when not the least thing goes wrong. But ask the captain, and he will tell you that his ship and crew are tested not by their smooth runs, but rather by those in which, through buffeting gales and mountainous seas, the vessel is at last brought safely into port. Some day the storm hits us in the failure of a cherished hope or project. Have we weakened ourselves by

making exceptions of ourselves? Can we take it? This is our test. Can we sail our boat in a storm? Are we ready to admit that life for us is cut out of the same cloth as for our people? Then, and not until then, will we have the first faint likeness in our ministry to him who said that he came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

When driving in mountainous country and following the curves of the road for a long distance one often comes upon an official sign reading, "Caution—Winding Road." I have often commented to myself, "What do they think I've been driving on up to now?" The sign seems to be utterly superfluous; but doubtless it is useful as a reminder that there is more ahead, so do not grow careless. Our ministry is on a winding road with curves aplenty. Someone has said that a rear-view window is a good thing to use on the highway of life, especially when making a left turn. It is equally true that our forward progress will be determined by the use of our brake as we come upon the many signs that read, "Slow, Curve Ahead."

VI

Five Senses and Two More

IT IS A COMFORTABLE AND USEFUL THING FOR EVERY man to possess all of his five senses unimpaired. Yet it is not essential. There have been pastors who were blind, some who were deaf. My wife tells me that I have a woefully deficient sense of smell. No doubt there are those whose taste and touch are below normal standards. We cannot say that they would have better served their Lord but for this lack. Sometimes a handicap serves ultimately to increase one's usefulness.

For a minister the five senses then are desirable, but are not a matter of absolute necessity. There is a sixth sense, however, and a seventh that are indispensable. The sixth is common sense, and the seventh a sense of humor.

Common sense is defined as "an ordinary mental capacity." There are few who would deny that we ministers possess ordinary mental capacity, especially if the emphasis is put upon the "ordinary." Plenty of doubt, however, might be cast upon our measuring up to the further definition of common sense as "practical understanding; capacity to see and take things in their right light; sound judgment."

Our shortcomings are many. They are not all of them in the lack of good intent. Most of them are the result of a lack of just an ordinary common garden variety of good judgment. We need to bring all the mental and spiritual capacity we possess to our task; but no literary or ecclesiastical alphabet after our name, or title, or position in the church is a substitute for good judgment, or any indication that we possess it.

Tragic, indeed, have been the personal failures in the ministry for want of sound judgment. Some men, seemingly possessing every other quality but this, have been brought low by its absence. Good tools are not to be despised; yet, of themselves, they do not guarantee good work. This depends on the hand that uses them. Some men do better work with little than others do with much. For effective service in the field of pastoral endeavor, good judgment is second only to a convincing personal spiritual life. Every pastor can and must possess both.

There are many people who are not Christians, or who are, at least, outside of the church of God. There are various reasons for it, chief of which is, of course, that the Evil One has sown his seed in the human heart. Our frequent approach to the problem is to assume that all of these deny God, and must be convinced of him and his ways and their own shortcomings. It would probably surprise many of us to learn how many of them do not deny God, or their need of him. They are not

with us simply because our interpretations and our ways and our approach do not make sense to them. The number of men is legion who are outside of the church because of someone's poor judgment in presenting the Master of life to them. The Gospels are the only truly worth-while book on Pastoral Theology. What amazing discernment they reveal on the part of Jesus in his touch with men! All of us should read the Gospels again and again, and yet again, for the purpose of absorbing something of Jesus' good judgment in his approach to men. His ways were as various as the individuals whom he sought. Think of his dealings with Peter and John, Judas, Zacchaeus, the woman by the well, the woman taken in adultery, the rich young ruler, the questioning lawyer, the Roman centurion, the disciples on the way to Emmaus, blind Bartimaeus, Mary and Martha, Nicodemus, the Pharisees, Pilate! He had no single formula for all of these, only an unerring discernment as to their needs. He called his disciples to him with the simple words, "Follow me"—nothing more. How short we come of Jesus' method with our creedal precepts and demanding forms of discipleship! We are more restricting but far less challenging than Jesus was. What was it that the Master had? Why not say it? Jesus had common sense, and he used it. May God forgive us for its absence or its disuse in our ministry!

When we pray, as we surely do, for God's blessing on our work, most of us ought to be more

definite than we are. The words, "Bless us, Lord," may mean little or much, depending on what we need. To ask just for a blessing is widely inclusive, but it is certainly not specific. And if we were aware of one of our greatest needs in our pastoral task, there would be one specific blessing that we should pray for every day: "Dear Lord, bless me this day with common sense."

Because in other chapters we have tried to detail something of this ministerial sixth sense, let us turn to the seventh, which is like unto it—a sense of humor.

We may thank God that we live in a world in which there is laughter. There are tears here; there are tragedy and sadness. There are times when all we can do is to weep. But there is gladness too—sunshine, humor, fun. There are times when all we can do is to laugh.

Humor is a universal quality in human nature. There is no race of people who do not know how to laugh. Their humor may not be ours, but it is very real to them. Dan Crawford told us that the black man in the jungles of Africa can laugh most heartily. The Chinese have an especially keen sense of humor. It is something restricted to no race or color. It is such a universal quality that we should think of it as the gift of God it is.

It is certain that our work is cast with a laughter-loving people. Americans demand that in every program of entertainment there be some fun. Our religious papers all have their columns

of jokes. Our newspapers would look strange without their funny strips. Several years ago, at the time of a nominating convention to choose a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, Will Rogers was appearing in a theater in the same city. It was actually difficult to keep enough delegates in the convention hall to do business, since most of them were listening to Rogers' fun. He was probably saving the country at that! Humor is undoubtedly a most vital part of life. Most of us feel that there is something left out of the man who cannot laugh. We are uncomfortable in the presence of any man who has starved out his God-given power to see a humorous situation.

There is really no non-sense about humor. True humor is the best of all good sense. There are various tests for insanity, such as putting a pail under a faucet, turning on the faucet to fill the pail, and then directing the subject to dip the water out of the pail with a dipper. If the subject turns off the water he is sane, but if he dips without turning off the faucet he is crazy. Another test that seems more valid is that of normal reaction in laughter to a chosen situation. Not everyone, perhaps, who laughs is sane; but those who never laugh, or chuckle inside, are not normal. Russell Conwell used to deliver a great lecture on laughter in which in part he discussed the ill effects which the inability to laugh has on the rational mind. Because he is dealing with reasonable beings, and because, above all, he himself should be a

reasonable being, a minister does well not to neglect his sense of humor.

It is a quality which we should be sure to bring to our task. There is an expression of the Psalmist, "All that is within me," which any Christian would do well to remember when days are hard. When the Psalmist came into the presence of the Lord he was unwilling that his worship should involve only a fraction of his nature. He was not content that only one or two of his faculties or powers should prostrate themselves before the King of Heaven, but called upon everything within him to bless his Holy Name. Too frequently we endeavor to get on by the use of only a meager part of our equipment. We suppress a portion of our nature, and by the suppression weaken our power of service. A sense of humor is an asset at all times, especially in days that are particularly somber. If we suppress our sense of humor, we expose ourselves at once to all sorts of demons which are eager to overthrow us. We are never safe when we lose our power to laugh. A good laugh is a safety valve. The comic is a part of human life. The very reason that the world is dark is an argument that somebody should make merry. The world would be unendurable if there were no one in it any longer capable of mirth. If we wish to minister to the souls of men in needy times, we must use everything that is within us; and one of these things is our sense of humor.

There are, of course, different kinds of laughter

and types of humor. There is the laughter at a sudden and clever turn of a word, the chuckle of pure good spirits, the laughter of buffoonery and the smirk of cynicism, the guffaw at the ludicrous and the cackle of unholy glee and irony. There is the mirth of the devil and the laughter of God. Laughter and tears are both with us. What we need to know is the proper time. And it is especially true of our levity. We scarcely make any mistake in our time to weep, but we often do in our time to laugh.

There is then a time to be merry. There is first of all a time for joviality in our relation to others. Laughter may be personal and selfish. We ought to learn to be joyous with our friends. We are aware of the need of friendly sympathy. We know that it means sharing another's grief, expressing our fellow feeling in our friend's moments of sadness, and helping him to bear his burden of sorrow. Any sympathy does mean that, but that is only half of it. If you are truly going to help your friend and neighbor you need to cultivate the art of laughing with him and sharing his gladness. It is far easier to laugh with him than to weep with him, and yet we often fail to do it. Joy may be as lonely as sorrow. There are times when joy is intensified wonderfully by another's sharing it. We have all had times surely when our happiness needed only the glad sympathy of another to make it complete—times when we could hardly wait to break some good news to someone

who we knew would bubble over in elation with us. Assuredly it is a part of a pastor's task, and one of the great privileges of his ministry, to add to another's happiness by joining in his gladness and mirth and laughter.

There is always a temptation to laugh at others instead of laughing with them. There is a laughing at others that is harmless. We smile at the ludicrous antics of a person trying to keep his balance when slipping on an icy surface, and rare is the one who fails to laugh heartily when, after having gone down with arms and legs sprawling, he tries to get up with dignity as if nothing had happened. But there is nothing heartless about such laughter, for we rush to help him, and the laughter dies at once if he is in any way hurt. Still, there is a laughter at others which is mean, and the minister is not incapable of it. There is perhaps no weapon that can hurt so much as a laugh. It is never true humor to laugh at the failure of another. Furthermore, it shows our littleness of soul. There is a laughter and fun that is like medicine; but laughter at another, when it hurts that other person, is poison to one's own spirit.

There is such a thing as the laughter of scorn, and it is not for any human soul to use it. One of the Psalms says, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." God can laugh that way because he is God, and we had better leave it to him.

No one has more need of a sense of humor than a minister of divine truth. And no one can better serve himself with a sense of humor than the minister. No man with a sense of humor about funny situations has all the humor he needs unless he has enough to sometimes direct it at himself. There is a sense, however, in which this may be a weakness. I once knew a seminary student who laughed away his chance to become an effective minister. He was a wretched preacher, but a most popular fellow. For that reason everybody tried to help him, but he loved a laugh too much. He was a great mimic, and he would imitate himself and turn his mistakes into something to produce a laugh. A proper sense of personal dignity, instead of making light of our failures and laughing at them, will endure the pain involved in overcoming them.

On the other hand, there are many times when we take ourselves too seriously. The poorest of us often has too much pride for his own good. It would be better if we would learn at least to grin at our own shallow dignity. The proudest people usually have the least to be proud about. Now, the real enemy of pride is humor. The keenest barbs to pierce the armor of self-conceit are those of wit. The wit of others directed at self-pride and pretense would hurt, but our own wit directed against ourselves robs it of its sting. What could be more helpful when we find ourselves strutting over something for which we deserve no credit

than to develop the art of just grinning at ourselves? It may be one of the most difficult things to learn to do, but the rewards are worth the effort.

The impressive, prideful attitude of some self-styled superior-minded people toward religion is just funny. We would be less disturbed by them than we often are if we could see the actual humor of it. How pompously serious and inflated the critic often is! I once heard Dr. Dunbar Ogden tell of his meeting with a critically minded professor on shipboard. The professor, upon learning that Dr. Ogden was a minister, asked him for a Bible that he might read the Old Testament. In three days' time he brought the Bible back and, turning to several different passages in the Book, said, "Did you notice this little absurdity?" Ignoring the great laws of Moses, the sociology of the Prophets, the poetry and sublimity of the Psalms, all he could say was, "Did you notice this little absurdity?" Dr. Ogden's humor saved him from concern and even annoyance as, looking at the man, he amusingly imagined God putting his finger down on the bald head of the professor and using his own words, "Did you notice this little absurdity?"

There are some pastors whose serious-minded religion would be better for a little humor. There are some good men who are saints all right, but of an irritating variety. It is not for me to say that they fret the Lord, but I do know that, for

many others, they make religion a boring thing instead of attractive. There is nothing less attractive than piety divorced from common sense. Even a little sense of humor would help the man who is always playing upon one string. There are too many of us like the student in the seminary who, in his practice preaching, always preached on the same theme—baptism. His professors felt that he was going a little strong on one subject; so they decided to give him a text which they believed would compel him to preach on something else. But they did not know their man. Using the text given him, he rose to preach saying, "My text this morning is found in the first chapter of Genesis, 'God created the heaven and the earth.' My friends, the Lord made the earth one part land and three parts water, which naturally brings us to the subject of baptism."

What most of us need is an old-fashioned court jester. The king business is about dead in our world today. It may be that the passing of kings is due to the passing of the court jester. He was the court buffoon, but he was nobody's fool. He was more useful than many a royal statesman. Everybody about the king was likely to be a "yes man." People were afraid to be anything else. The court jester could say "No." He did not always say it in so many words, but he could mimic and play the fool and bring home to the king, with a laugh, the folly of some contemplated

course of action. The laughter of a court jester saved many a kingdom.

So it was a fine thing for a king to have someone who could look him in the face and laugh him out of his moods of folly, his silly pretense and his pride. It was a serious loss to our own country when the unofficial court jester of America, Will Rogers, passed away. It is a good thing for any minister to be laughed at sometimes. There is an inner voice in us all that can say to us what nobody else would dare to say. Knowing us as none other, it must sometimes chuckle in amusement. It is a voice that is trying to serve us and save us. And if we are half as wise as we often pretend to be, we shall encourage our other self, the inner voice, to be our court jester, giving vent when necessary to a shout of laughter at our expense.

In one of his parables Safed the Sage said:

Now there be many Earnest Folk who lack something at this point, and it is an Important Cog that hath been dropped out of their Machinery. They would be able to make a number of Grades that now are impossible to them if they would Shift their Gears and not attempt to take all the hills on High. And while nothing is much worse than a Sense of Humor that is not Ballasted by Sound Common Sense, yet on the other hand there is no man who hath so good a right to a little spice of Nonsense as he who is Habitually and Consistently a Sensible Man.

There came once to see me a Woman with a problem, and I listened unto her Tale of Woe and smiled. And

she said, Thou dost not sufficiently regard my problem as Serious. And I said, It is not Serious. All that thou needest is a Passing Smile and Something Else to think about. And she was grieved, and went her way, but afterwards she considered and thanked me.

Life is serious enough, beloved, and he is a fool whose Incurable Laughter at all that doth occur in life is like unto the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot, as my friend Solomon was accustomed to observe. Life hath its concerns that are not only Serious but Tragick, and they must be faced in their Stark Reality. But there is no command in Holy Writ for to Increase and Multiply our Tragedies and Discourage the Earth. Wherefore hath God imparted unto us something that He must count Very Precious in his own Character, even a Sense of Humor.

I have no present intention of adding any to the Ten Commandments, but if I decide to supplement the work of my friend Moses, I shall consider this one:

Thou shalt not take thyself too seriously.¹

Yes, there is a time to laugh; and the most frequent of times for the minister is to laugh at the man we pretend to be, that we may become the man we ought to be. None more than we needs to bid the inner self, who dwells in our soul, to laugh at us and to deride us, lest one day, for our failure to serve the Lord with "all that is within [us]," we may hear it in the dreadful form when "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

¹ Reprinted through the courtesy of the family of the author, Rev. William E. Barton, D.D.

VII

Those Who Are Not With Us

A SAYING MAY BE HACKNEYED AND STILL BE PACKED with truth. One such saying is, "It takes all kinds of people to make a world." The secular world, however, has no monopoly on varieties of types of people in its make-up. It looks as if our religious world is even overburdened with them.

We are a varied lot, we Christians. If we were to look at ourselves objectively, stand off as one on the outside, we could hardly be proud of ourselves, as we note our larger denominational divisions, our sects and independent churches, our isms, our Holiness, Dispensational, Adventist groups, and our so-called modernist and fundamentalist factions, some within the larger groups, and others separate and distinct and militantly opposing. We are a motley crew. We not only seem to have a lot of different oars, but are pulling in opposite directions. And some won't even admit that we are all in the same boat.

This situation is, of course, confusing to people outside of the church, resulting in the indifference and the scorn of many. There is no minister, however, who finds himself at ease about it. All of us are concerned that there should be so

little unity of impact of our spiritual resources upon an evil world. And it becomes a deeply personal disturbance to many ministers as these widely differing viewpoints mean criticism or attack against themselves by those who differ with them. Some men find their congregations divided, with certain groups setting themselves in array against them. Some such groups, overstressing some phase of religious truth, take the part for the whole and tirelessly labor their point. They are out of harmony with the teaching of their minister and they demand that he be the one to change his tune. Whether or not this be an acutely personal problem for us, we are all aware that there are those who claim to be within the fold of Christ who are not with us. And some are so definitely not with us that they are against us. Or maybe it is we who are against them.

How are we to be faithful ministers and good pastors in this situation? It is evident that this is a question of attitudes. It is especially a pastoral question if, as it may happen, the differences are within our own congregation.

It may be that we ourselves have some rather settled opinions about the religious values of some who differ with us. I know that I have. I am quite convinced that I would rather have my own child have no formal relationship with a religious group at all than to be under the influences of some of them. I am quite sure that some forms of religion make people morally poorer instead of richer, and

weaker rather than stronger. It is possible, of course, that they would say that of mine.

I know that there are some forms of religious emphasis which I feel definitely have this tendency. One of them is the religion of emotionalism. It is the religion of escape. It is fraught with the feeling of release. It is the religion now of copious tears, and now of loud hallelujahs, neither of which ever proves to be much more than a momentary stimulant. James tells of the man who, looking into a mirror, "goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." But emotionalism does not even look into the mirror of self-analysis. The pulsating ecstasy of feeling is too satisfying for that. Except for the time spent in so-called religious exercises which might otherwise have been spent for some even lesser purpose, nothing is different at all because of it.

I have some aversion too for types of religion that build up mere codes of conduct as standards for Christian living. We not only have small and admittedly odd groups such as the Amish and Dunkards, for whom a style of dress and a restriction as to the use of modern conveniences is a distinguishing mark of their religion, but also we have something equally wide of the heart of religion in larger groups and churches, where things done, or not done, in accordance with accepted codes of the group are the standard of one's Christianity. Certain restraints are laid

down, and anyone who breaks over these is considered a heathen and a publican. Psychologically there is actually a morally deteriorating influence in such restrictions and limiting qualities of life. For one thing, there is too much moral satisfaction born of outward conformity with them, and too little training in moral discrimination and values against the time when one faces a situation not covered by the restricted codes of conduct. In merely learning the restriction of "thou shalt not," one may miss altogether the undergirding principles of "thou shalt." Here the Christian soldier may have learned a manual of arms, but not much about how to fight an enemy when on his own.

Furthermore, I find myself critical of the strict lines drawn by the religion of "modernist" and "fundamentalist." Personally I think that anyone would have rather a hard time lining up Jesus Christ strictly with either one. The Pharisees were certain he was a modernist. The Sermon on the Mount was revolutionary enough and a complete denial of old shibboleths. On the other hand, Jesus was loyal to the synagogue and the sacrifices of the Temple. He went back of the Torah to the older Prophets for his authority. It is hard to believe that such a one would approve of the volume of contention with which some have sought to place him solely on their side, or that he needs any last-ditch defenders any more than he needed the literal sword of Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane.

If he said, "He that is not with me is against me," he also said, "He that is not against us is for us." And if he told of a separation final and complete of the sheep and the goats at the judgment, he was yet widely inclusive when he said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto me." We often seem far more ready than Jesus was to draw a line and say, "Stand you on that side, for on this side am I."

The bitterly caustic remark of Job to his critics was deserved—"No doubt wisdom shall die with you." Whatever position we hold, we can be of little use to God unless we truly manifest in our ministry that we do not merit a similar summary of our attitudes. None of us has a charter of all truth. The important thing for all of us is that if, for instance, we do abhor mere emotionalism, we yet recognize its worth over against the hardness of mere logic, and the warmth of its tears over against the coldness of unyielding hearts, and that we remember that narrowness is not worse than shallowness, that inner discipline and restriction must ever be present, and that zealotness and even controversy are better than dead formalism or a mere socially correct church affiliation.

Nobody is going to be worth very much as a minister without strong convictions concerning his own interpretation of religious truth and those of his group; but let us be assured that others have convictions too, and that a consideration of

the things they hold may conceivably be critically constructive and corrective for us.

Furthermore, we have our own job to do and gospel to preach. It ought to be pro-Christ and not against some other group or some other minister. It may be that some other group or person is wrong. Yet it is better to preach for Christ than against them. And it does not follow that in proving they are wrong we have proven that we are right. The test of us runs deeper than that. Our orthodoxy is not established upon the ruin of that of anyone else.

A rabbi friend of mine recently suggested that "respect" is a better word than "toleration." Who more than a minister should respect the convictions and the work of others? Some are doing a work in a spot where we would fail. They are reaching men and women whom we could not touch. To tolerate them is not enough. We must respect them. And when we do not, we are out of line with the scripture that says:

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. . . . But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not [love] . . .

Some of the differences that arise in the interpretation of truth may seem more important than

they really are. Temperaments vary and the angle from which one looks may give a different aspect of the same truth. Somewhere I once read a little story of a Scotch father that has helped me to understand how the same words may be used and the meaning put into them be wholly conflicting. The old Scot was very angry when his only son left home, and its restricted opportunities, to be on his own in the world. The father cut him out of his life and his thought, and bade his faithful daughter never to mention the name of her brother in his presence. The sister's heart was heavy about it all; but she was overjoyed indeed when, after more than a year of silence, a letter came addressed to the father from his son. Neither father nor daughter could read. The father was too angry and still too hurt to want to read it anyway. But after much persuasion the daughter induced him to go with her to the village butcher and ask him to read the letter for them. The butcher was a gruff soul with a harsh voice and contentious personality. So he roughly took the letter in his hand and with characteristic churlishness of accent read, "Dear Father: I am very sick. Won't you please send me some money? Your son, John." Upon hearing it read thus, the father said, "The ungrateful rascal! I won't send him a cent." The daughter sadly walked home with him; but before they entered the gate she said, "Father, let's take the letter over to the baker. He is a good man and friendly, and he will read the letter to us, for may-

be there is something that the butcher did not see." So they went to the baker, who was indeed a good man and understanding, with the spirit of Christ in his heart. Gently he took the letter from the father's hand and spoke with kindness of the absent boy. Then, with feeling and sympathy, he read the selfsame words: "Dear Father: I am very sick. Won't you please send me some money? Your son, John." And the hard old Scotch father, with tears glistening in his eyes, said to the daughter tenderly, "How much do you think we can send him?"

"For ye have need of patience," wrote the author of the Book of Hebrews. It is up-to-date advice for the exasperation sometimes occasioned by some who suddenly become critical of our spiritual life. A new light has shone for them, and a new truth has dawned for them, and their minister must be converted to it. A zealous young woman came to a minister whom I know to tell him that he ought to make a new all-out surrender to his Lord. She did not know, and he could not tell her, that years before, as a boy of seventeen, he told his father that he wanted to be a minister but his father forbade it, and that when he was twenty-one he again approached his father, who replied that if he chose the cloth the door of his house would be closed against him and he would no longer be his son. And from that day forward he was cut off from his father's house. Most of us have need of a continual surrender; and this min-

ister, acknowledging that, did not claim that his original sacrifice was enough. But he had need of patience, and he exercised it, remembering that youthful zeal, though inconsiderately critical, could yet be turned to good account.

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman was asked in one of his radio question periods, "How can I persuade another person to believe as I believe?" He answered with telling brevity, as he knew so well how to do, "By living a better life than he does." That is always the minister's opportunity in any difference of belief or practice. Our dogma is never as persuasive and convincing as the conclusiveness of a reality and sincerity in our personal religion.

James Hilton, in *Random Harvest*, depicts a London cleric by the name of Blampied—a quaint, varied personality, a timid, unworldly parson of fiction—who was both a crusader and a mystic, but some of whose philosophy of life many of us could adopt with profit to ourselves and the cause we serve. Blampied says that

every man should have some small matter to which he attaches undue importance, always provided that he realizes the undueness.

The Oxfordshire men in the story

obviously regarded the parson as an oddity, but being country people they knew that men, like trees and unlike suburban houses, were never exactly the same, and

this idea of unsameness as the pattern of life meant that (as Blampied put it) they didn't think there was anything *very* odd in anyone being a *little* odd.

Commenting about his former political activity, Blampied confesses:

The truth is, Smith, I never could get along with all the Risers-to-Second-That and the On-a-Point-of-Orderers. If I were God, I'd say—Let there be Light. But as I'm not God, I'd rather spend my time plotting for Him in the dark than in holding committee meetings in a man-made blaze of publicity.¹

Dr. Halford E. Luccock speaks of "crowding Christ into a uniform." That is a mistake we often make about him who is too big for any uniform and is always greater than any pattern we fashion to enclose him. Stanley Jones has spoken of "The Christ of the Indian Road," saying that Christ ought to be presented as Christ, and stripped of our Western thought and preconceptions. A missionary of thirty years of service in China once told me that he was certain that they had made a mistake in their attitude about Chinese ancestor worship, for instead of sublimating it and transforming it into some form of the Christian conception of the living dead, they insisted that it be given up. As a result the Chinese concluded that Christianity meant a turning of their backs upon

¹ Used by permission of Little, Brown & Co. and the Atlantic Monthly Press.

their deep-rooted and worthy filial piety. How rarely do we dare preach Christ and let him have his own way with men! We insist upon putting him into our uniform. Perhaps it is because we have never dared ourselves to wear his. It is so much easier to be busy sewing braid on our own, brushing it off and shining up its buttons, than to acknowledge its unlikeness to Christ's, whose uniform was a crown of thorns, whose symbol a cross, and whose purpose to do utterly the will of the Father.

For contentiousness there is no place whatever, no matter what the issue. No difference of opinion or conviction, no question of orthodoxy or practice, can ever merit a surrender of the inner spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in us. We must ever be his valiant followers. But it is tragic always when anyone comes to believe that he personally is the Lord's last line of defense, that he only is left, and that the issue is so final that he must draw the sword in defense of the Lord against all comers. Then it is that anything and everything contrary to his spirit may happen. And it usually does.

There is a passage in the first chapter of Philipians that strikes at the heart of this matter. It is Paul of strong convictions, the sturdy, strong crusader for his Lord, who writes:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of

contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Notwithstanding, Christ is preached! Let us be sure that we do that in word and in life. None of us has enough of the grace and strength and spirit of our Lord to dissipate any of it in attack. Let us give our all to our ministry, as God gives us grace, and let the other fellow give his. It may be that God is using us all; and we ought then to give him a chance to use all we are, with nothing of us diverted against anyone else.

There is a radio story of a shepherd, away on his lonely station, writing in to ask the broadcaster to strike *A* on the studio piano that he might tune his old violin, his only comfort in his solitary task. And so the broadcasting station did, and some days later a letter came expressing gratitude and saying, "Now I'm in tune." Each of us has his own note, and others have theirs. We do not need, all of us, to play the same note; but we do need, each of us, to be in tune with the great *A* who is the Lord and Master of us all.

VIII

*Pastoral Psychiatry*¹

THAT THERE IS A QUICKENED INTEREST IN THE RELATIONSHIP of the mental sciences to religion is evidenced by the many recent books published on this subject. Books on psychology and psychiatry are on every religious book list. The terms psychology and psychiatry are often used interchangeably though they are not the same. Psychiatry is psychology with an M.D. degree.

It is worthy of note that there is a change in the relation of these mental sciences to religion. A generation ago psychology was advanced largely as a substitute for religion. Today, together with psychiatry, it analyzes our religious behavior and helps us to understand the way in which religion operates within the individual.

The minister has been variously affected by the emphases of these mental sciences. Some have bowed down before them. A *Christian Century* editorial says: "Many have relied for the authentication of their message, not on a prophetic, 'Thus saith the Lord,' but on the word which has proceeded out of Vienna, 'Thus saith Freud and

¹ This chapter appeared in *The Register*, Louisville Theological Seminary, and is reprinted by permission.

Adler.' " Some ministers have found a new gospel in psychology. And some ministers, with scant knowledge of psychiatry, have rushed to establish religious clinics, and have set themselves up as counselors for all manner of mental and spiritual ailments.

There is, however, a very definite and helpful use of the new facts of psychology and psychiatry on the part of the pastor. A study of these subjects will help any man to preach Jesus Christ more intelligently and efficiently. It will further help him, in the pastoral relation, to minister better to men in the application of religion to life. And, still more, it will enable a minister, if personally applied, to be himself a better personality through which the Spirit can work.

Much might be said as to an improvement in our preaching from a knowledge of psychology and psychiatry, but primarily we need their help in our pastoral work. If they are applied there, our preaching as well is sure to be favorably affected.

Both psychology and psychiatry are studies in personality. And let it be remembered that in our ministry we are dealing with personality. The gospel truth is not an abstract truth. Jesus himself was constantly dealing with persons. In his teaching, for instance, about "the water of life" it was the woman at the well in Samaria who gave the truth its meaning.

Now if we are to deal with the personalities of men and women in the name of our Lord, we need

first an awareness of what is going on in the lives of people. And it is this with which psychology and psychiatry are concerned. We must understand better than some of us do the anxieties of our people, their torture of spirit, their fears—fears of poverty, ill-health, death, unpopularity—their moods of despondency, worry, their sense of defeat. There is the despair of many in the realization at last that the hopes and dreams of their life are never to be realized. There is the conflict between religion and sex. There is the clash of personalities in the marriage relation. There are mental disturbances both real and imaginary, resulting in sick souls and sick bodies. Much of this, of course, is covered by the old and familiar word “sin.” But “sin” is often too much of a generic term. We need to break it down into its many manifestations if we are to deal helpfully with man as a sinner and with the destroying effect of his sin in his life.

And, if we need an awareness of the conflicts in personality, we need also to know something of what people do about such conflicts. The most characteristic reaction to the problems of personality is the turning to some sort of escape mechanism. We know that the crank, the legalist, and the Pharisee are in every company of religious folk. They are usually evading some major ethical requirement and compensating therefor by excessive concern about some small matter. We cannot thus classify every meticulous church-

man, but the persons of whom we are speaking are by no means rare. Pride, boastfulness, and cultural superiority are often complexes which result from avoiding a coming to terms with one's own inferiorities. We need to know that destructive habits, as for instance drunkenness, are often secondary manifestations of a primary unhappiness and defeat. It is the easiest "out" for many a person. An enmity against another is often used as an evasion of the hatreds in one's own heart. When we wrong someone we frequently keep our fault out of our consciousness by assuming a critical attitude toward his slightest weakness. Sometimes men "draw the sword in the name of the Lord." They believe themselves standing as the last defense of the Lord in the field of religious controversy. Too often it is the escape mechanism again. It is then a personal running away from facing one's own inner battle to conquer bitterness, and pride, and enmity in one's own heart. Most reactions of all of us to personality difficulty, which is another term for human sin, are in the direction of covering up, and refusing to face the stern realities of self. And these all are evidences of a sense of inner failure that, either consciously or unconsciously, we seek to ignore or justify.

To learn more about these reactions from a study of psychology and psychiatry will help us to know how to preach about sin. Some of the above reactions mean quite the same as the old term "under conviction of sin." And if we study

psychology it is not that we may preach it, but that we may learn how more effectively to reach the sinner with the message of the gospel.

If our preaching in the pulpit is effectively done, it will often be followed by personal interviews with our hearers. The average minister to-day has more people come to him with their perplexities than did the average minister a generation ago. Now, we are busy with many things, with administration and with the preparation of sermons, and the coming of people to us for personal help is always an interruption. But we ought to encourage people to come to us, and we ought to give liberally of our time to personal contacts. And if they do not come, we should be greatly concerned about our ministry. If none come to us it must be because we are dogmatic, severe, unsympathetic. Men came easily to our Master. If we are truly ministering in his name, they will come to us. Let us encourage them to come, and let us seek all the help we can get toward turning them to him when they come. It must never be for us only an interruption. It is a glorious privilege.

It is not, of course, necessary to set up a clinic or in any formal way to establish a counseling period. Our personal contacts may be casual. They may be in the home, in our study, or on the street. There are many instances in every pastor's experience when the casual contacts have been more fruitful than those of a studied approach.

People will come to us for the more definite interview and conference if they have learned from our method of preaching, and from our personality, that we are sympathetic and spiritually discerning.

Without setting up a formal counseling service we can, however, and must, as occasion arises, give counsel of soul. Very often troubled souls are helped immeasurably by someone to whom they can unburden themselves. We can first of all be good listeners. Dr. William S. Sadler says that the problems of life are personality problems every one; that "home" is a symbol only, for it is actually a personal relationship. The difficulties there are first personal and secondarily home difficulties. He adds: "The more you love a person, the more you can hate him if you go into reverse." Whatever technical or scientific terms we use about them, the difficulties themselves are all personal. Furthermore, Dr. Sadler says that, as ministers, we must remember that all cases of personality difficulty are a result of a frustration in reaching some goal. This is true of every nervous disorder whatsoever. Therefore the minister in conference must not pay attention to the thing complained of. He must get behind it. He must ignore the defense mechanism. It is a smoke screen to keep up self-respect. We can help people to save their self-respect by getting back to what it is all about. The pastor cannot be content any

more than can the physician merely to treat symptoms.

We must remember that the person is in need of God, and that the individual himself is always a part of the situation at issue. The person complained of is never alone responsible. We must seek to bring home to the one in difficulty that inevitably there is something that he can do about it, that there is something in him that needs God's help to solve his problem whatever it is.

We can teach men to pray. We can help them to make for reality in their religious life. Dr. John Rathbone Oliver, in his book *Fear*, said that there is one group of persons who are never found in his clinic at Johns Hopkins, and they are the true Christians. Not the mere church attendant, not the person who has a correct theology, but the one who has trust and faith and dependence on God, who has in daily life made earnest with the fact that he is God's child. The difficulty, whatever it may be, is basically spiritual.

It is necessary to know when medical help is needed. A true knowledge of psychiatry will enable us to minister to souls in distress, but one of its most helpful services to us should be to show us that we are not trained psychiatrists and should not seek to serve as such. On the other hand, there is no magic in a pious prayer or a passage of scripture, nor can the personality difficulty be necessarily solved by a single dose of

spiritual medicine. It may take a long time and repeated effort. It certainly will take consecration, sympathy, understanding, devotion, and prayer. We must give of ourselves to the utmost when we have the privilege of personal interviews with a troubled soul. And we need to take counsel with those who can give us of their technical knowledge, not forgetting him who is Lord of the soul.

But finally an acquaintance with the truths of psychology and psychiatry is necessary for the sake of our own personality as ministers of God. We need much for our task besides a technical theological education, important as that is. A missionary in India asked a Christian native boy to repair the wire of her electric lamp. The lad, after fumbling at the task for a time and getting nowhere, taxed the patience of the missionary, and she finally said to him in irritation: "Haven't you any common sense at all?" To which the native lad replied: "Madam, common sense is a gift of God. I have only a technical education."

As pastors we often have little more than a technical education. The gift of God to see ourselves as he sees us is the kind of common sense without which we invalidate our ministry almost completely. It is urgent that we learn the truths of the mental sciences, not just for effective service to others, but to apply them to ourselves. We should often check ourselves for compensations, for the presence of excuses and evasions. Minis-

ters are ruined by little things. A text upon which as ministers we would do well to preach to ourselves is that of Ecclesiastes 10:1. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." None of us can be perfect, but our eye must be upon ourselves, as well as upon others. It is imperative that we face the fact that we are especially subject to the personality defects of cant, of self-pity, pride, envy, of the critical spirit, of facing human sin before our people in terms of "you" and not "we." We must identify ourselves with our people for our own sakes and for theirs.

They need to know our sympathy and understanding. They will not turn to us if we are harsh in our judgments of them and easy upon ourselves. God cannot use a stuffed shirt, or any man who makes an exception of himself. In dealing with others a pastor often avoids trouble by recognizing it. Let him do so in regard to himself. We must admit that the sins of personality are our own, too. They must be taken to the same Lord whom we preach to others. What kind of a man we are is a determining factor in our ministry. In the end it determines everything. Above all, it is we ourselves who need a sane and balanced personality. We are our own best subjects. If we are to know about counseling others, let us be sure to counsel with ourselves, and with God.

IX

To Join This Man and This Woman

THERE ARE MANY TERMS USED RELATIVE TO A MINISTER'S part in a marriage service. He solemnizes a marriage; he performs a ceremony; he reads the marriage lines; he marries a couple; he officiates at a wedding. We may prefer one term above the other; but whatever words are used to indicate his official capacity, the minister serves in a threefold relationship: as the legal representative of the state, a priestly representative of the church, and as counselor and adviser to the man and woman whom he joins in marriage.

As the legal representative of the state, the minister must conform to its laws and regulations. State laws are varied as to persons performing marriages. Legal residence is usually required. Sometimes the minister must give bond. In every instance a license is required on the part of those to be married. The minister must not only require the presentation of the license and ascertain that it is in proper form before he performs the ceremony, but must, without fail, return the proper forms to the county clerk for official registration of the marriage. This is required by law, and is an obligation due the persons married, that their

legal standing as a married couple may be officially recorded. Most licenses indicate a penalty upon the minister for failure to return the paper to the county clerk, and any laxness in its enforcement does not excuse the minister from his obligation to the parties married to see that their marriage is legally registered. The license contains information as to age, and, if minors, the consent of parents, and status of participating parties—whether single, or whether previously married and separated by death or divorce.

As to the wedding ceremony itself, there is no set form. There are set forms of marriage services, but these may be modified or changed as the minister chooses, except that the questions as to consent from both parties must not be omitted. The ceremony may be memorized or read. Probably the service that is read suggests something more of authority than a memorized one, just as reading the Scriptures is preferable to a memorized recitation of them. Our personal opinion is that restraint should be exercised in the matter of interpolations on the part of the minister. Simplicity in the service is to be sought rather than flowery forms of extended advice to the bride and groom. It is not unknown for ministers to conduct this service as if they were the main participants in the ceremony. When changes are made in the service, let them be in the direction of simplicity and clarity, such as in the words used in the giving of the ring. The words, "This

ring I give thee, in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love," are preferable to the older form, "With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." The latter is difficult to repeat after the minister, and I know of one instance when the groom said, "With this ring I thee wed, and with all thy worldly goods I me endow." Whatever form of service is used, let it be dignified, scriptural, and impressive.

Both church weddings and formal home weddings require a rehearsal. There are no unvarying rules as to formation or procession of the bridal party, except that the bride stand at the left of the groom. In the rehearsal the minister can be of helpful assistance as his advice is sought as to arrangements. He does not direct the rehearsal, but should be ready to help carry out the bride's wishes; and in the presence of some officious volunteer director, relative or otherwise, who overrules the bride, as sometimes happens, he can tactfully support the bride that she may have her wedding the way she wants it. A brief resume of the ceremony and the responses of the bride and groom will acquaint them with the proper procedure. It is helpful in the actual ceremony for the minister to repeat clearly the instructions, such as when to join hands, that the bride and groom do not have to carry in their minds when in the service they are to do what, and may be able better to appreciate the significance of the service itself.

The suggestion in advance that the bride and groom look at each other as they repeat their vows, and not at the minister, will help in the impressiveness of the service. Whatever manifests a true personal interest in the wedding on the part of the minister will not only help in the preparation for the ceremony, but will be deeply appreciated on the part of the bride and groom, and thus help to make the church's part in their wedding significant to them.

The choice of whether there shall be a church or a home wedding is naturally a matter for the bride and her family to decide. The determining reason for home weddings may often be the prohibitive costs of elaborate church decorations. We may be able to do something toward increasing the number of church weddings through discouraging, as far as possible, elaborate decorations and such expenses as that, which make church weddings so costly. If the wedding is solemnized at home, let it be truly solemnized. The minister can do much to make a home wedding as sacred as that in the church, and sometimes, because of its greater privacy and less stagey effects, truly more significant as a religious ceremony.

Of late years there has been great emphasis placed on educational preparation for marriage in its religious, psychological, and physical aspects. It is undoubtedly needed. There are two forms in which this is advocated—general education and personal counseling. It is obvious that

there should be general education in preparation for marriage. In this the home, the school, the church, and other character-building agencies should participate. The instruction should deal, as the Committee on Marriage and the Home of the Federal Council of Churches has suggested, "with the principles of happy and successful marriage such as ideals for the home, wise choice of partners, the wide range of marital adjustments, home management, children and their nurture, and especially with the place of religion in individual and family life."

Premarital interviews are also advocated as preparation for marriage. Some ministers have made it a rule not to marry any couple with whom they have not had a premarital conference. There is a wide difference of opinion and practice regarding such interviews. Their value would naturally depend on the voluntary participation of the young people to be married. Some ministers feel that no rule can be properly laid down as to required counseling with the minister. Most young people seem to be as definitely serious and as religiously grounded as ever their parents were. If a minister has no set rule for premarital counseling, he can, and should, so establish himself in the life of youth that they will naturally seek him out for such counseling if they desire it, and he should be able to speak frankly and understandingly to them when they come to him. Ignorance and maladjustment of the sex relation is a fre-

quent cause of unhappy marriage. As the minister has opportunity, he can suggest literature that deals helpfully and frankly, but in the Christian spirit, with such matters. It is of doubtful wisdom for a minister to insist arbitrarily that such information be given to every couple he is to marry, but there can be no doubt that he must be prepared to give it as opportunity naturally presents itself.

No true minister will do anything to encourage the commercialization of marriage. Stunt weddings, and any use of them for advertising purposes, are "out" for any true representative of the church. They have no more place in the sacredness of things than a stunt funeral at a county fair, or the sacrament of the Lord's Supper held in the open street.

One of the forms of pastoral ministry often neglected is the later pastoral service given to the married couple. A call upon them helps to continue their feeling that the minister has had a vital part in the founding of their home, and that his interest is real and abiding. And as he continues to share with them in the happenings of that home, he is in a normal relationship for them to turn to him, or for him to volunteer to help them should difficulties arise between them. Couples who make their homes in other communities may be helped to make satisfactory contacts with churches in the communities to which they go. And as the children come into the home,

let the minister be sure to share their joy and anxiety with them, whether they be near or far away. In every way possible he should quicken their conviction that he did not merely perform a ceremony for them, but that he is one with them in their hopes and desires for the happiness of their continued marriage.

The most disturbing thing for the minister and marriage is the problem of the remarriage of divorced persons. It seems simplified for the minister of churches which have rigid rules against remarriage except for the innocent party in a divorce secured on the grounds of adultery. All he has to do, it would seem, is to state the rule of his church. But for many men in such churches this is not too satisfactory a method, for it does not meet the real factors involved. We are not too consistent in adherence to scriptural warrant when, upon the remarriage of divorced persons by someone else, the church freely offers them every other sacred service of the altar. No Protestant church, at least, refuses the Lord's Supper to a couple it has refused to marry. We seem to say, "We will not break our rule, but we won't let it make any difference anyway." Moreover, divorce papers do not invariably give the true reason for a divorce, and therefore they cannot be relied upon as a final judgment as to the scriptural status of divorced persons.

Most of us wish that some church law could be laid down that is just and considerate, and worthy

of the sacredness of the institution of marriage, and that sustains its spiritual character. It is obvious that it is difficult to apply an arbitrary rule. On the other hand, no minister wants to have the individual responsibility of decision as to whom he may, or may not, properly remarry.

The matter of divorce and remarriage is a perplexing one indeed. There are so many times when, whatever decision is rendered, a haunting doubt remains that, as ministers, we have not met the situation for the best good of either marriage in general or the individuals involved. The minister must be true to his ordination vows in the church of which he is a minister. If his church has rigid rules on the matter of remarriage of divorced persons, he can only obey them. If he is a minister of a church that has less rigid church law and practice, let him remember that he has an allegiance and responsibility to God. For the Protestant minister marriage is not a sacrament, but it is none the less a sacred rite. He can never take his relationship to it lightly. If he is free to exercise his own judgment, let it be done through counsel with the Most High "who sanctifies marriage and hallows it." And, above all, let him scorn being known as a "marrying parson." Ten marriages a year may not produce as many fees as fifty, but the smaller number may be a truer indication of the minister's sense of his holy calling, and offer him a peace of mind and heart that a prostitution of his ministry for fees must inevitably destroy. Ministerial

integrity is essential always, and in no place more than in the disturbing question as to whom, under God, he is privileged to marry.

Fortunately the perplexities of the divorce situation are not always present. And it is well to remember that participation in a marriage is normally one of the happy things in our ministry. We are often weighed down with a sense of obligations, problems, and duties. Both ourselves and our ministry are the poorer for it. It would be well if, in regard to our ministry, we would often declare a moratorium on the word duty, and in its stead think, and use, the word privilege. There can be no question but that it is a privilege for the minister to be called in to share in the happiness and joy of a wedding. Too often the church is considered by many as an instrument of restraint, the advocate for all things beyond the range of common life, and ever giving tongue to duty, that "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!" But at a wedding the church and minister are included as partners in one of life's high occasions of gladness and lofty expectations. Jesus was a guest at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. He added to the joy of the feast. It is the privilege of the minister to be something more than simply the officiating clergyman. Let him participate in such a way that his calling, and his church, and his Lord, may be brought into a fitting relationship with one of life's most gladsome moments.

X

When Death Comes

OUR MINISTRY IS CONCERNED WITH LIFE AND DEATH—with life in two worlds, and death in this one. And perhaps no part of our pastoral mission is a greater test of what is in us of the spirit of Christ than our ministry to grieving hearts in the time of death. And with death comes the service for the dead, and the ministry of comfort and strength for their loved ones. Funerals are, particularly, a service which must never be for us a common thing. If ever our Lord has touched our hearts with tenderness and thoughtfulness of others, it will be manifest at this time.

For a pastor a death means much more than a funeral. It means a service to be rendered from the moment he is called about the fact of death, and extending, in most cases, for many months to come. There is usually no delay in notifying the minister when death has come. Let there be no delay in his reaching the home that is bereaved. It means much to a family to know that their pastor counts his service to them in their critical hour as something that takes precedence over everything else. It may be that they are not yet ready to make arrangements for the funeral, but

they are ready for their pastor's love and comfort and prayer. The minister should meet them first of all as a comforting friend, not as one who has called to make arrangements for a funeral. Sorrow fills their horizon. We must in no way belittle it. It is not our task to try to explain it away, but to bring them close to God. It is not ours to suggest that things might be worse. It is worse for them. It is ours to let God in for them. It is not often that the grieved are rebellious. They are often bewildered, and want, above all, someone upon whom they can lean, in whom they can trust, with the confidence that he understands how they feel, and feels with them.

Phillips H. Lord, as Seth Parker, once told the story of a young widow who seemed inconsolable when, after a few months of married life, her husband was killed in an accident. None seemed able to help her. She would not leave the house. No one could cheer her. She did not want them around. One day an old doctor friend dropped in for a call and stayed the afternoon. The next day she was out in her garden tending her flowers as of old, and the following day she went out to do her marketing. And soon she took up her life in a normal way again in spite of lingering marks of sadness. To her neighbors it seemed as if the doctor had worked a miracle.

One day Seth asked the doctor what he had done to soften her grief when all others failed.

"Well," said the doctor, "I didn't try to cheer

her up as the others had done. I sat down and told her about losing Mary a couple of years after we were married, and how I'd loved her, and how hard it was to keep going after the Lord had taken her from me."

"But didn't Lucy start crying?" asked Seth.

"Yes," said the doctor. "But I moved over next to her, and I put my head down on the table and cried too."¹

That is what Jesus did. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus wept with the sorrowing sisters.

It suggests to us our first ministry of comfort, that sorrowing hearts should know, first of all, the depth of our feeling with them.

When the bereaved family is ready to talk about the funeral services the minister can helpfully counsel with them, advising with them as to their own wishes, tactfully making suggestions when necessary, and avoiding always any sense of a stereotyped procedure on his part.

It is apparent that some of our funerals still have something of pagan practices about them. There may be some things that we will feel should be more Christian. But funeral customs in some communities are so traditional that it is difficult to change them. However desirable a change may be, in our estimation, we must be guided by local custom and make changes slowly. When changes are made in customary procedure, it is wise to do

¹ Used by permission of Mr. Lord.

only some one thing differently that adds to the Christian meaning of the service. And if the change truly does so, more and more people will wish to have it that way, and the old, less desirable custom can be ultimately dropped away.

One of the most desirable changes that has gradually come about is in the direction of brevity for funeral services. A service of from twenty to thirty minutes is not hurrying the last rites for the dead. The solemnity of the service makes it seem longer than it is. It is a long, long period for sorrowing hearts.

Many ministers no longer preach a funeral sermon. Many have abandoned the practice of even making any "brief remarks" of a personal nature. The custom is growing for ministers to confine themselves to the words of scripture. This has been my own practice for many years. I was led to do this by the frequency with which I was asked to do so. I found in my experience that, when I most desired to make some personal reference to the Christian life of the one gone on before, I was invariably asked not to do so, while occasionally, when little could be said, too much was expected. And thus for more than twenty years we have acceptably followed this custom. Any minister preferring this form of service may not be able to introduce it all at once, nor should he try to do so, but he will come upon some who so request it. He thus has an opportunity to re-

veal how meaningful such a brief scriptural service, without sermon or eulogy, can be.

It would seem that the words of God himself should be the words to use at the time of death, especially as it is so often under circumstances beyond any words of our own. Certainly it is no time for man's judgment, either upon the person or the circumstances of his passing. We ought to take our cue from Jesus here, who, knowing better than we can ever know, refrained from passing judgment in some astounding cases. We can read the words of God and dare to let them bring their own judgment. We can leave something to the intelligence of men. There is less glossing over the evils of men from saying too little than from saying too much. There are many things that we had better leave to God. And it is well for the minister to remember that a funeral service is not his place to be prominent, that in all things he is merely the instrument of the voice of God, and not God himself.

Making a service truly meaningful in which the Scripture alone is prominent is complicated by the wretched way in which many men read the Scriptures. Here is literature beyond comparison with any other. We call it the Word of God. In it are challenge and demand, hope and assurance, promise and comfort, life and death. There ought to be something in the way it is read that would bring men to the edge of their seats in commanding attention. Instead it is too often their oppor-

tunity to sit back in ease and think of something else. The inattention of an average audience to the reading of the Scriptures is appalling. It is neither their fault nor that of the Scripture. It is wholly ours. The Word of God has never come alive to many people because we have always read it as a lifeless thing. Without question every minister should seek some voice culture and practice in interpretation from competent instructors, until he learns to read the words of God in such a way that they will sound as a message from the Most High. To stumble over and to mumble the life-giving words, to read them as if they were some foreign language, is unforgivable. It is true that no mere elocution is enough. The well-known story of the actor and the old minister, each reading the Twenty-third Psalm, and the actor saying, after the minister had brought silence and tears instead of applause, "My friends, the difference is that I know the Psalm, but this man of God knows the Shepherd," touches the heart of it. But it must have been true that the old minister read the Psalm with something of his knowledge of God in his manner and his voice too. The Scriptures always ought to be a personal message for those who wait upon its words. It is a personal message—the word of God himself for sorrowing, hungry hearts. And it is tragic that so many times it should fail to reach those hearts because we read the precious words in a manner so unworthy

of them. I believe that if I had only one word of counsel to young men about a funeral service, it would be to enrich their experience in the reading of the Word of God. No practice in reading, or expense in private instruction, is too much if we can improve our interpretation of the Scriptures. They deserve an intelligent exposition always; and in the presence of grieving hearts nothing in their meaning of comfort, and their message of faith and hope and love, should be lessened by our poor, faltering interpretation of them.

The prayers at a funeral service should, of course, be comforting, and a solace of hope for sorrowing hearts. There can be thanksgiving for the life of the one taken away, and praise for faithfulness of life and service. Such praise should be in sincere gratitude, and not made the occasion of eulogy in prayer. A brief prayer for God's blessing upon his words of truth may be made before the passages of scripture are read. This will bring home to the hearers the truth expressed by Peter, who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

No form of service can be laid down for every circumstance. Some people desire music at the service; others do not wish it at all. If there be music, let the minister suggest, as he has opportunity, some meaningful hymns of hope, and trust, and praise. One of the most impressive services I ever witnessed was that of a home missionary

in whose service the congregation joined in the singing of "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand," with his widow raising her voice with others in the glory of the thought. Instead of hymns sung, they may be read; and sometimes, after the hymn has been read, the organist might play it softly as the words silently sing in the heart to the accompaniment of the music.

Every minister would do well to gather from many sources different funeral services, poems, hymns, that his services and passages read do not become stereotyped, either for himself or for some who may hear him frequently. Passages of scripture will, of course, be chosen with reference to the particular occasion. There are passages suitable for the funeral of a little child, and others for those of three-score years and ten. We will need to be prepared to officiate at services for saints and sinners, for those with faith, and those with no faith at all, for some to whom the house of God has been the home of their soul, and for others who have been utter strangers to the church. And sorrowing families will differ, too, in their spiritual experiences. These various circumstances will determine the choice of scripture, and, furthermore, make it clear that no set form of service can serve for all funerals alike.

The services at the grave may be varied from the familiar committal form. Many people desire that the committal words be omitted altogether. When any fraternal order is to have part in the

funeral service, the minister should meet its representative that there may be a mutual understanding about the order of service. Usually the fraternal service is conducted at the grave and takes the place of the minister's service. Courtesy requires the minister to remain through the other service, and customarily he is asked to conclude the entire service with the benediction.

Turning from the grave the sorrow is not left behind, nor is the minister's task of comfort ended. Bereaved hearts will need his help for a long time. Our greatest ministry of helpfulness may be rendered in the days and weeks that follow. We can be of help through counsel not to make decisions as to sweeping changes too quickly. We can help much by just letting the sorrowing ones know that we have not forgotten. Recognition in our prayer when they attend the worship service for the first time, a call made upon the anniversary of the remembered day, and anything that shows our understanding heart, will be a ministry of comfort, if indeed it be that our service has not been, as it never should be, a professional one.

The matter of fees for funeral services is a real problem. It seems to be increasingly the custom to send the minister some fee for his services, even on the part of his own church members. No minister should do anything to encourage it. It is, however, exceedingly difficult to discourage it. Even a public statement that no fees are expected

seems to be inadequate. When a fee is offered it is embarrassing to the giver if it is refused. He is led to feel that he has done the wrong thing. Recently I told a young widow of one of my officers that I felt embarrassed by her having sent me a check for the funeral services. She wept bitterly about that, saying that the last thing she wanted to do was to embarrass me. I found that it would have been better for me not to have tried to return it. Sometimes the minister is under some personal expense, and often this is not paid. The fees received may equalize that for him. One can return the gift, if possible, or accept it with a note of thanks, and use it for the church, or the poor, or for some book in memory of the one for whose service it was given.

The funeral is, indeed, a spiritual opportunity. People are eager to believe in something. It is true even of unbelievers. There is nothing very happy about infidelity at any time. And it all comes home with sharper reality in the presence of death. Even Robert G. Ingersoll, by the side of his brother's grave, spoke of "the rustle of angels' wings." A minister's presentation of eternal truths, his own confidence and assurance, and his sense of spiritual values, can bring to the shadows of death the light of a world unseen. At this time ears are attentive and hearts are open. This is our opportunity to lift a whole company of people into a fresh sense of God's nearness and reality, and help to invest their daily life with a

new and finer meaning as the values which are imperishable are brought home to them.

And out of this ministry to others in bereavement and death some strength and faith and blessing should come into the pastor's own life. Leslie Weatherhead says that one of his friends, passing through deep sorrow, said to him, "If I could have my life again, I would include that experience of sorrow because it taught me so much about God and about life." The true minister has not only his own sorrows, but those of others upon his heart. They too can teach him about God and about life. And God and life must be very real to him if he is to minister to men in any way whatever, whether in joy or in sorrow.

XI

Books

NO MINISTER CAN WALK ALONE AND BE A GOOD minister. He cannot afford to live only in the days of his own years, nor can he see all of life through his own eyes or know all truth through his own experience. He must travel the world around. He must live for a while in all ages. He must know people of all lands, listen to voices long silent. His study windows must open upon all the world. Books and more books are the answer for him. He needs the friends they bring him. He needs books as his meat and drink. He needs them in his task as the carpenter needs his tools.

Books mean nothing at all to some people. A minister friend of mine told me that, sitting in a barber chair, he was asked about his son who had been a customer too, but had not been in the shop for some time.

"How is your boy?" said the barber. "I have not seen him this year."

"He is away at school."

"Why, I thought that he had finished college," said the barber.

"Yes, he has; but he is at the University of Chicago now," said the minister.

“What is he studying there?”

“He is taking a course in literature, and most of his study is in reading many books,” the minister explained.

Then said the barber, “Four years at college, and then he goes to the university just to read books! My Lord, I never read a book in my life!”

Few of us, perhaps, require any reminder that a minister without books can be neither a worthy preacher nor a good pastor. Most of us are quite aware of the relation between our library shelves and our equipment in both mind and heart for our work. Our difficulty is not that we feel no need of books and reading, but that we hardly know which books to read, and which to buy, and how to buy them.

A careful regard for all the various fields of reading will help us in our choice of what to read and what books to buy.

There are the fields of philosophy, theology, and biblical studies. We must keep alive to these. They cover our own field of knowledge. We cannot afford to be ignorant here.

Some knowledge of history is essential. We are now living in the present, and religion is a matter of everyday living, but often there is truth in this criticism which an English clergyman made on American preaching—“so much as though nothing had happened before last Saturday night.”

We will want to know something of the lives of men. Biography will therefore be included in our reading. Every preacher will find suggestions and help in the life stories of men like Phillips Brooks, John Wesley, or Alexander Whyte. There has been a great increase in biographical writing in recent years. We have the lives of many men in many areas of life opened before us.

Sociology and economics must not be neglected. We are preaching to, and living with, men and women in a world of changing social patterns and economic problems. Our message is changeless. It is the same for every day and every time. But new terms and new approaches must bring the eternal, changless truth to apply in new situations.

Science too must be taken into account in our reading. We can never be experts here and should not try to be. We ought, however, to know something of what is happening in the scientific world. And we must be wise and sensible above all else in our use of what we learn here. The pulpit has been used to debate and attack scientific theories. Our present danger is that we may go to the other extreme and take them for our texts. Carl Wallace Petty said:

There are those committed to the ministry of the altar who find their highest glory in acting as acolytes to the priests of the laboratory. Apostles of the atom, evangelists of the electron, in their anxiety to be interpreters of the latest vogue in science, they forget that, after all,

at the center of religion is a cross and not a crucible. . . . We are not confronted with the task of convincing skeptical minds that the religion of Jesus is reasonable. We are up against the more stupendous enterprise of convincing pagan hearts that it is desirable.¹

Temptations, we know, come to us in very subtle ways. If evil were always recognized for what it is there would not be so much of it. There are lurking dangers in the most admirable reading program. One of them is in reading only for the immediate requirement for sermon material and ministerial needs. Another is in the lure of sheer intellectualism. We must not be led into a world apart from the people we are committed to serve. We have to read and know many things, but we cannot be content with just possessing a superior knowledge. Sometimes we can find that we have come a long way from the knowledge of our fathers, only to discover that we have come in the wrong direction.

When Grandma, and Grandpa, had a guest over night,
They gave him at ten o'clock a kerosene light;
Then the poor victim, shivering, repaired
To an icy spare room that never was aired;
Gooseflesh all over as he washed in a bowl;
Very brief commune with God about his soul—
Then he dove hastily into the bed,
And reached for the solace on the stand by its head;

¹ From *Today's Jesus*. Copyright, The Judson Press, Philadelphia. Used by permission.

There he found always the excellent books
Of Talmage, Martineau, Beecher, and Brooks.

Grandma, and Grandpa, my great-aunts are dead,
But still stands the table by the guest-room bed;
Steam heat, electric light, flowers and fresh air
Make the job of going up not so hard to bear;
Hot bath, shower bath, needle bath and spray
Give you such comfort that you don't need to pray;
Sink on the box springs and reach for a book;
Don't you want that one? Have another look;
Culture our watchword, and this is what it means—
Einstein, Eddington, Millikan, and Jeans.²

And "that's the world today" for too many ministers.

The scope of our reading will, of course, include fiction. This is the limit of the average church member's indulgence in books. We need not be ashamed of reading fiction for its own sake. And certainly we ought to know something of what our people are reading. It is not necessary to read every best seller. Just a "look see" at the book, or a review, will serve for some. A good detective story may often be what we need for relaxation. Then, too, a novelist has to be interesting. Maybe a preacher can learn something from him on that score. Some works of fiction should be on our book list.

Our bookcases should have one shelf or more for poetry and drama. There are dramatic quali-

² Walter Prichard Eaton. Used by permission.

ties in abundance in the gospel story. Poetry and drama will help us to appreciate these and use them.

Whatever the counsel about books of sermons, every minister is sure to read some of them. And why not? None of us knows so much about how to preach that he cannot be helped by seeing how the other fellow does it. And it is not without possibility that sometimes this may be fruitful in learning how not to do it. We all need the inspiration and uplift that can come to us from another's ministry. When I was beginning my ministry, I lived in New York City and took every occasion to hear Dr. John H. Jowett in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Instead of making me, a neophyte in the ministry, feel my woeful shortcomings as a preacher, I always came away from hearing Dr. Jowett thrilled and enthusiastic at the privilege of having some part in a ministry so great. I am quite sure that I would starve to death spiritually if the only sermons I ever heard or read were my own.

We must have some place on our study desk for church papers and magazines. Some of them will acquaint us with plans for church management. They will help us to evaluate and adapt methods, enable us to check our own, and sometimes may encourage us as we find that we are on the right track.

In our reading we will naturally gather mate-

rial for future use. We will make notations in the books themselves or otherwise keep some reference to the things we have read. But how to find them again when we want them I do not know. I have heard of men who had devised some method of cross references and filing of reading notes; but after fruitless efforts to do it myself, I am convinced that the proverbial needle in a haystack is not harder to find than something I have filed away. Most of us just have to put our book on the shelf, and sometimes find the thing we want again when we want it, and sometimes not. Much of our material naturally serves its purpose of inspiration and illustration quickly because both Sunday and Wednesday happen along every week.

There are books which may be considered very definitely our working tools. They are an encyclopedia, commentaries, a concordance, and a thesaurus. Use of them will vary with different men. Sets of books and commentaries in many volumes are not too profitable because frequently one or two authors are featured, and the rest are just filling. A good concordance is a necessity. I personally could not get along without my thesaurus. As to commentaries, it is every man for himself. The tendency is undoubtedly in the direction of a lesser use of them. Single volumes by different authors who are especially equipped for comment on special books are preferable to sets. No man can be an authority on every book in the Bible.

Books of illustrations are rarely worth their price. Their use illustrates nothing but a sense of unreality in religious experience. Choice of illustrations from our general reading, or our own experience, may be less pretty, but they will be more vital.

Sometimes we forget to include the Bible in our reading list. In all our reading the comment of one minister's daughter is suggestive. One Sunday afternoon her father was preparing for a special Sunday-evening engagement after having been away from his study for most of the week. He had his papers before him at home, with books on a chair near by, and some on the floor. The children were making considerable noise; so he asked them to try to be quiet. And one of them, unaccustomed to seeing her daddy doing his sermon work at home, asked, "What are you doing, Daddy?"

He replied, "I am trying to write a sermon."

Then the little one, looking at the books and papers strewn about, said, "Why don't you fool 'em, Daddy, and give 'em one out of the Bible?"

The problem of what to read, and how to use what we read, is great enough, but for most of us it shrinks beside the question of how to buy the books to read. The average church member does not realize that the minister pays for gasoline for several thousand miles' use of his car for church purposes, and that he must buy from thirty-five to one hundred books a year. One min-

ister said to me the other day, "I never buy ten gallons of gasoline but what I say to myself, 'There go a couple of books.' " It would seem that churches ought to help their ministers here. But they don't, and that's that. We just have to do the best we can about it.

Our limitation of funds will, at least, help us to buy wisely. The family objection to our too great expenditure for books may well be heeded. We must be fair to them here. One of my seminary professors said that he was helped to keep peace with his wife about book expenditures, and to get fuller value from his books too, by leaving every new book on his desk until it was read, making this rule for himself: "No new books until these are read."

Some fees received may be most properly added to one's book budget. I have received fees at times for funerals when accepting them was an embarrassment to me, and the refusal of which would be most embarrassing to the donors. It is difficult to know what to do about it. One solution is to use such a gift for books, perhaps informing the family that you will use the money for that purpose, and inscribing the name of their loved one in the books as a memorial.

I have always found a visit to a book store both a delight and a disturbing experience. There are so many books that I would like to read and ought to read. Yet I am limited as to time and money. It is a delight to browse among the books, but it

is also discomfoting to know how much I am compelled to miss of all that I would like to make my own. Well, we cannot read all the books we would like, much less afford to buy any more than a small proportion of those we want for our own bookshelves. The first thing to do is to be philosophical about it. If we had the money we could not possibly read all the books we would like to buy. Many of them, therefore, would necessarily have to remain closed to us. The second thing is that, after we have carefully and wisely made our limited choice, we have a full and grateful appreciation for the vast stores of knowledge that exist for us to explore as we are able to do so.

XII

Time, Vacation, Money

THREE OF MY NEPHEWS, ABOUT SIX, EIGHT, AND TEN, were overheard one day when, after the manner of children, they were talking about what they wanted to be when they grew up.

The youngest said, "I want to be a motorman."

The eight-year-old replied, "Aw, I don't want to be anyone who just runs things; I want to be a preacher like Uncle Pete."

But the youngest, to whom, of course, attending church services was an ordeal of some length and fatigue, answered, "Not for me; you have to stand up all the time."

Then the oldest boy contributed his bit of wisdom by adding, "Yes, but look what you've got during the week."

The idea, we may be sure, is not confined to children that the minister has really got something between Sundays. And they are right at that.

I wonder if we ourselves are always aware of how much we have? We have six days that are all our own. We have no boss, no one to tell us what to do, or when to do it. We have no time clock to punch. We have a week's time on our

hands to do with as we will. That is a great privilege. It is also a great danger.

It would be well to remind ourselves each morning of this privilege, and of our guilt if it is abused. For we will have gone a long way in the faithful use of our time when we squarely face the fact that our time is in our own hands. If it is wasted, we are responsible. If we are too busy, we have allowed it to be so. If we have too little time for study, or personal devotions, or visitation, or anything else we must do, it is not time that is at fault, but our management of it.

When a minister takes up a new work in a new community, he is usually considered fair game for everybody who wants to use him in some public activity or program. Let him keep his head in this circumstance. He has not suddenly acquired an exalted place in the community. He is just a new face and a new voice. Unless he is cautious he will soon find himself a community Boy Scout or community handy man. As to participation in varied types of programs, let him remember that it is not likely that the public is clamoring to hear him, but that some program chairman, with a duty to perform, is seeking to complete a program. His part is to get somebody to say "Yes," and his job is done. The most likely candidate is the new minister. We cannot afford to be boorish in such circumstances, but neither can we afford to be an easy mark. It is not part

of our task to be a "yes man" to every call that is made upon us. We have long heard that "time is money." For the minister it is at least valuable enough not to let it be used indiscriminately.

Some ministers are great joiners. They have membership in lodges, civic groups, luncheon clubs, musical organizations, clubs and boards of various kinds. It would be neither reasonable nor wise to assume an attitude of aloofness toward all activity and association with one's fellows, but any minister who joins every group into which he is invited, or engages in every activity that solicits his effort, is woefully careless with one of his most precious assets—time.

No man can properly tell another how to use his time. It ought to be clear that we must plan our day. An elaborate schedule is not required. It is stretching a point too far to make a schedule for every moment in the day, but intelligent order in our use of time is a necessity.

Some men can plan in greater detail than others, but it is absolutely essential for all of us to order times for study, calling, reading, meetings, and the broad outlines of our program. We are fond of telling ourselves, and others, how busy we are. Sometimes we are not as busy as we think we are; sometimes we are busy at the wrong things. And always the fault is ours. We have just as much time as anybody else has for his job. And our time is our own. I think that if we honestly

face that fact many of us will use our time more wisely and will do a better job.

It would seem that most everything about one's ministry is something of a problem. Well, in part that is true. The personal elements of a minister's life are more a factor in his task than they are in that of anyone else. We have chosen that kind of a task.

There are some perplexities for us even in the matter of our vacation. Some of our people, at least, are perplexed about it. The preacher does not seem to them to be very much broken down by his work. They do not have a month away from their work. Satan is always on the job. Why should a minister take a vacation for a whole month or even more?

However it came about, it is the established custom for a church to give its minister a vacation. Somebody must have discovered at some time that it is as good for the church as for the minister that they be rid of him for a while each year. Probably more of our people than we know appreciate the imperative need of relaxation and rebuilding in the exacting work of a minister and pastor. These will expect us to relax and to enjoy ourselves, and to come back refreshed and strengthened for our task.

How shall we use our vacation time? No man can even suggest what kind of a vacation another needs or enjoys. I used to try, upon the request of others, to find some place for them near where

I spend my vacation. But not any more. Never, not even once, did my conception of what they would like coincide with theirs. I am convinced that in vacations each man is a law unto himself.

Ministers are as individual as anyone else, if not more so. Some like to travel, some to rough it, some to attend religious conferences. Some work hard at it; others just want to loaf. Let a man have the courage to do what he wants to do. I used to feel a little guilty about not going to the summer conferences of my church, and somewhat apprehensive about my complete surrender to my lazy self to the extent that days on end even reading anything more than fiction was a burden. But it does not bother me any more. I have found that a complete change was just what I needed to send me back to my work with a zest far beyond that with which I had laid it aside.

I find it a delight, on my vacation, to sit in a pew on Sabbath mornings and not to preach myself. I could not stand to hear the same man for fifty-two Sundays in the year without a break. But after those few Sundays off, nothing could hold me back. I want to hear myself again.

Whatever sends us back to our task enriched in mind and body and soul has been a means of grace to us and to our people. And whatever does that, let us continue to do, whether or not it follows the pattern of anyone else. Jesus frequently said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while." If we have tried humbly and

earnestly to follow our Master in other things, we may rightly try to follow him in this too.

In the normal course of his task the minister will have many things to say to his people about money. There are perhaps even more things that he ought to say to himself about it. And what he says to himself about money is going to have more influence on his people than what he says to them. Our fundamental attitude in regard to money will determine our life for good or ill. It will determine the effectiveness of our work, and our personal happiness and contentment as well.

Paul says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." He is speaking, of course, of the right of every man to his support in material things. The words, however, are just as true if we interpret them to mean that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel alone. It suggests to me, at least, that as a minister I ought to live within the income received for preaching the gospel. Our salary may not be as much as we feel that we need or desire, but seeking to supplement it with other sources of income, of whatever kind, is dangerous indeed. Some years ago a nationally known minister of great power, having yielded to this lure, testified to its ruinous effect upon his ministry, and humbly begged the forgiveness of those who may have been led by his example. His useful career remains clouded to this day. It is too easy to become more of a busi-

nessman than a minister. It is inevitable that it will divide our interest. We have one business, and one business only. Of no one is it so true as of a minister that "ye cannot serve God and mammon."

There is probably not as much understanding about money between the church and the minister as there ought to be. And for this the minister himself is largely to blame. He has sometimes been silent about money, not only to his own hurt, but to the harm of the church as well. Most churches want to do the right thing by their minister financially. They have little idea of what must go into his work from his salary. Dr. Cleland B. McAfee, in his book *Ministerial Practices*, has a suggestion about frankness in salary discussion when receiving a call. It would seem that after a minister has served his people for some time, and has established by his devotion and his conduct that money is not of primary consideration with him, he ought to be able on proper occasion to speak without undue reserve about money as it pertains to himself. In one of the three churches I have served, a friend, close enough to me to know something about my financial situation, without my knowledge spoke to some of the officers about my salary. Then he came to me and told me about it and said that they had expressed surprise that I had never spoken to them about it, as they did not know my need. Well, was that an invitation! Thus at their suggestion I made a

frank statement to them to their satisfaction and mine. It does not seem to me that such action was altogether unique.

Let a minister tell himself, believe it, and practice it, that money is not the deciding factor in his own happiness and satisfaction. The years of depression and reduced salary taught many a minister some things he should never forget. One of them is that to have given oneself to one's task without stint, and with no lessening of effort and devotion, commands a self-respect that is without price. If ever our financial return is the measure of our giving of ourselves in the service of the Lord, we ought to be utterly ashamed of ourselves. And we will be.

How to spend one's money may seem to present little difficulty because we will never have very much of it to spend. It might be accepted that of necessity we will learn the laws of thrift. A definite budget will be a great help. If possible, a budget for both husband and wife is advisable. We will need to beware of the dangers as well as the benefits of installment buying. Prompt payment of bills is a matter affecting both our own peace of mind and the success of our work. Nothing can so undermine our effectiveness in our task as laxness here. A minister's credit is taken for granted. Without the utmost restraint he can be hopelessly in debt. It is tragic that so many men have impaired their usefulness through the use of the simple words, "Charge it."

As a rule one's salary is fairly proportionate to the scale of living needed in the field served. In the course of time salary increases will come to us. These should be used to relieve the pressure of our current living expenses, but they should also help us to provide for our future. One of the best ways for any minister to provide for the future is through life insurance. This provides protection for his family should he be taken from them. And should he live to retirement age, his insurance values can be added to his retirement income. The ministers' annuity plans of most churches provide at least a foundation for retirement income. An ultimate insurance income added to one's pension receipts will provide a modest but adequate retirement fund, and meanwhile enable us to dismiss this whole matter from our minds during our active ministry.

Modern hospitalization insurance providing for hospital service is open to ministers as a group. Sick-benefit insurance policies that pay sick benefits in cash over a period of weeks or months are also available.

Owning a home is possible under present long-term methods of payment if one's pastorate is likely to cover a number of years. Home ownership is a matter both of saving and of security and contentment.

Our finances may always continue to be something of a problem; but nobody has an easy time in this matter, not even those who seem to have

much more than we. If the truth were known, some of them may be envying us.

In any event we ought always to practice what we preach. And in nothing is this more urgent than in the matter of money. We will often find ourselves preaching about the discipline of the difficult. When I was a boy I had to take molasses and sulphur. I was told that it was good for me. And I guess it was. The most potent medicine usually has some bitter tang to it. Any bitterness incident to having too little money, however, is not to be compared with the tragedy of having too much. The salvation of many a marriage is in the financial struggles that cause the two to pull together. Financial struggle may have broken some lives, but it has made many more. We have an opportunity to make the whole question of money a source of discipline and strength to ourselves. What other thing is there for a true minister of God to make out of it?

XIII

This and That

NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW JUST WHAT PAUL'S THORN in the flesh was. I have heard it suggested that probably it was his board of deacons. Many a pastor is critical of his officers, feeling that too often they are a liability in the work of the church rather than an asset. It is not difficult to draw up an indictment against any board of officers—they lack responsibility; they are dictatorial or stubborn; they like the prestige of the office but not the obligations it involves; they spend the money but make the preacher raise it; they are afraid of change; they want a soothing-syrup gospel; their conception of their task is to be a brake upon the minister; they will make a venture in business but never in the church. Any minister could extend the list. The officers' list of the preacher's failings, however, might be longer and even more blighting. When we have something like this growling around inside of us, it will be wholesome to ask ourselves if we are really thinking about a more efficient church organization, or easing up on our own failings by putting our finger on those of others. We never get anywhere

in any situation unless we are willing to be clear-eyed about it.

Suppose we do have a difficult officer situation. We are a part of it, and the only thing we can do about it is on our side of it. We can be better ministers than they are officers—that will help. We can remember that we helped to choose some of those officers, and then never spent a moment in guiding them or instructing them in their duties. We can be patient; we can stop trying to force things; we can pray about it—and not as the Pharisee either, but as the publican. We can study the strong points of our men and use them where a task will engage their strength instead of accentuating their weakness. We can tell ourselves that if everything were perfect our job would pall. And when we get together in official meetings, we can have sense enough to withhold all formal motions until frank and brotherly discussion has led to an agreement before a vote is taken. If anyone has to be voted down, let the matter go until a later time. It may be brought up again, or the question may resolve itself just because together we looked at both sides of it.

I always receive the most help whenever I look back over a period of three or four or five years at the things over which I worried and stewed, about which I was critical of others, and about which I finally had sense enough to pray and leave to the Lord, and find that they have worked out in a way beyond all expectations.

We sing a hymn sometimes which says,

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

Whether they are always mysterious ways or not, they are many times performed in little events and through casual things. It would be good to remember that when we so often agonize over some effort, and pray, and plan, and labor to bring something to pass. We need not pray, or plan, or work less, but it is helpful to note how often, when a result is accomplished, it was some little unstudied, casual thing that God used to bring it about. It is to be supposed that God, knowing us as he does, would be wise enough to use us often when we are not aware of it, as one way of keeping us humble.

The following is out of the experience of one of the most eloquent preachers I ever knew. A young man began to attend services in his church. He was a newcomer to the city, and Sunday was lonely; a church service helped. He was greatly attracted by the eloquence of the preacher and he finally became a regular attendant. The minister noted him there each week, but did not know who he was. Then one Sunday he was absent. It chanced that the next day, walking along a crowded downtown street, the minister met this young man. Still not knowing his name, the minister just put his hand upon his shoulder in passing and said, "I missed you last Sunday." Some

weeks later this young man came before the Session to unite with the church upon confession of his faith and to be baptized. The minister was surprised as he had had no personal interview with him about it. So he asked the young man how he came to take this step. And he said, "When I came to church at first it was because I was lonely and I enjoyed hearing you preach. It meant nothing personal to me until one day you touched me on the street and said that you missed me. And I began to think that, if in all that crowded church you noticed me, there must be something personal about this for me. I found there was, and here I am."

A mother came to me to tell me something her boy of twelve had said. He had recently joined the church and had been attending quite regularly with his mother. He was ill and in bed with a cold, and he had evidently been thinking about what his mother was doing for him, and how she sometimes asked him to do things that he wasn't always keen on doing, such as going to church, for he said, after patting the bed for his mother to sit down beside him, "You know, Mother, when I go to church I don't always get much out of Dr. Pleune's sermon, and sometimes I just daydream; but after the sermon, at the door, when he looks at me and says, 'Hi, Bob,' boy, that means a lot to me, and I am always glad I was there." I spend days on a sermon, and then "Hi, Bob," means more than anything else. A studied effort may do

little, a casual contact be fruitful. That is the way God often works. This carries no suggestion for us to labor less diligently, but it does suggest the value of the slightest word, and the power of the smallest deed—and this too, that we can turn men from God through casual ways and words as well as turn them to him.

The Book of our religion says, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." That is a counsel of humility. It is also a counsel for improvement. We can always learn from others as long as we recognize those things in which they are above us. But it is no counsel to fail to be ourselves. It suggests no false humility or belittling of ourselves. God has a use for us with what we have and what we are. Even being God, he cannot very well use us with the personality and the faculties of somebody else. We can serve him only with our own. And comparing ourselves always unfavorably with others only lessens our worth in God's hands.

I do not mean to imply that I have learned that truth or any other, but it was brought home to me in the very first pastoral and preaching work I ever did, and by a man whose discernment in this matter was hardly to be expected. It was after one year of my seminary course that I was asked to take full charge of a church in New York City during the summer. I had three sermons. They were used up after the first Sunday and

the first Wednesday. And I was scared to death because the pastor whose work I was doing was an especially brilliant man. I recall how I worked under the handicap of the thought of how the congregation must be comparing my poor efforts with his outstanding work. I made many friends, some of them in relationships that endured for many years, but one man was especially kind. He took me about New York and eased my loneliness. He was not particularly a spiritually minded man, but he gave me one of the most spiritually helpful hints I have ever received. One day he said to me, "I believe that you are doing yourself a disservice by thinking about our minister. Be yourself. That is the way we are thinking of you. You are our pastor now, and we are looking to you. Just forget about everything else." So I tried to be wholly myself; and it worked, not only to a far greater inner peace of mind for me, but to an effectiveness in the work which was not possible before. We must not be content with our gifts as they are, but seek to cultivate them. We do have our own abilities such as they are. Any comparison with those of others should challenge us to use ours to the full.

Whatever theological theories are developed out of the death of Jesus Christ, he was crucified because he would not conform. The founder of our faith was the first great questioner of things as everybody else believed them. When I remember

that, I have most respect for the young man who asks questions about "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." God can have little use for an old man who is only twenty-five years of age. If a young minister is not asking questions, he is not thinking. And if he is not thinking then, when is he going to begin? It is natural for a young man to feel that perhaps the past is too slow and inadequate for the present. It is unnatural for him to sign up unequivocally as a rock-ribbed conservative. Life will take care of things, soften and deepen his convictions, and he will know what and why he believes if he gives himself faithfully to a pastoral ministry for sinful, lost, suffering, sorrowing men. Let him not be disturbed if he does not know all the answers in the beginning. The place to learn them is in his work as the answers come in the needs of human lives.

Dr. William Barton, for many years an outstanding Congregational minister, once said to a group of candidates for ordination:

By what this Council is about to do to you, it is vastly increasing your power for harm. Yesterday as laymen, you might have committed any possible sin and been sent to jail for it and not much attention would have been paid to you. But tomorrow any one of you can get your name on the front page of every newspaper in the United States. Not many of you have the ability, perhaps, to achieve high distinction or to bring to the

Church great honor, but the least conspicuous of you for ability can bring the whole Church to shame.

It is proverbial that people talk about the minister at the Sunday dinner table. They are critical of his sermons, his grammar, his clothes and the color of his necktie, the cut of his hair, his mannerisms, his social errors, the length of his prayers and the things he prays for, of what he does in the pulpit and what he fails to do outside of the pulpit. Some of this criticism is silly, and most of it is not. The minister needs a critic. Somebody ought to tell him these things. But nobody does. They tell each other, but not him. So every man is out of luck who does not have a critic in his wife. That is an awful thing to wish on a minister's wife, who has problems enough of her own. She loves her husband, but she does not love him enough until she is willing to be critical of him in his work. The minister's own standard must be high enough to assure constant self-criticism. He will, however, do many things that may be little in themselves, but they will be large in their nuisance value in the minds of his people. He does not know that he does certain things, and he will hardly credit their truth unless his wife tells him about them. We can do some of the dumbest things and suddenly develop some of the queerest mannerisms even after years of service. I know it is hard for my wife to tell me of some things that I do, and I don't like it either, and sometimes I show my sensitiveness

too. But she has never given up trying, and I thank God for that. We naturally do not pick out our wives for their critical ability, nor do they choose us for our imperfections as ministers. Every minister's wife should soon learn that she can help her husband most by being his best ministerial critic. The worst thing she can do for him is to fold her hands and ecstatically look up at him, thinking that everything he does and says is perfection. Does any wife, knowing us, really think that?

It is sometimes supposed that sexual temptations must be a special difficulty for the minister because in his work he meets so many women. That is, for one thing, a slander against the womanhood of the church. I do not know what the percentage of impurity in ministers is as compared to other professions. Any lapse here is naturally headline material. I do know from conversations with many men that, as far as they are concerned, they never found this to be a problem at all. I am convinced that if a minister is clean-minded himself it is his best protection against impure suggestion from without. Impurity detects impurity. It is there first in the minister himself if ever the evil thing lifts its hand to beckon him on. The Bible says, "Unto the pure all things are pure." That is not true because it is in the Bible; it is there because it is irrevocably true. If ever a minister meets with deliberate sexual temptation

in the course of his ministerial duties, it is to be hoped that he will not only be strong enough to resist it, but will then go to the altar of his Lord and get down on his knees to ask God to help him with the weakness in him that made that temptation possible. We ought as Christian ministers to be far enough removed from Adam not to repeat his accusation that the woman tempted him.

A pastor has a man's job. Not everybody seems to think so. And it is not often that in fiction, or drama, or movies, he is so portrayed. Sometimes this gets under our skin. A Methodist bishop speaking out about this was answered by a newspaper editorial in the *Courier-Journal*. It was entitled, "Ministers Are Easy Targets."

Ministers, "parsons," clergymen, are made game of in the movies. To depict and deride them as though the old taunt that society is divided into men, women and ministers held the truth of the matter is easy and popular.

But it's slander. The churchman militant is not a museum piece. The "sissy" is. It isn't necessary to tell of the grit, pluck and endurance of missionaries all the world over. It isn't helpful to instance such towering, thundering prelates as Phillips Brooks. It is sufficient to take the men in charge of our city churches, to know their industry and discretion, to realize with what consecration they visit the sick in spirit, the mentally wrecked, the tempted and the tempters. Day by day they touch and struggle with the misery and injustice

of modern life, of civilization, Christian civilization so-called; such labors may well be summed up in one word, "manly."

But fiction's mission is to amuse. A caricature does better than a picture of the truth. We show the story of Nurse Cavell and draw tears; we do not show the chaplains on the firing lines and in the hospitals. It is so easy to believe in a hypocrite. We are, most of us, not altogether candid and without guile ourselves. And, then, to place a preacher in an embarrassing, a compromising position, what could better raise a laugh, and a snigger?

The Bishop has a grievance. If he be wise he will forget it. His cloth needs no vindication.¹

I wonder if Elbert Hubbard had ministers in mind when he wrote: "A great deal of good can be done in the world if one is not too careful about who gets the credit."

¹ Used by permission.

XIV

*Ministering to Children*¹

CHILDREN WERE DEAR TO THE HEART OF JESUS. IT is worth noting that at the time they "brought young children to him, that he should touch them," Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that the disciples rebuked them. They thought that Jesus was too busy and could not be bothered with children. Jesus was the first to make clear that any ministry that is too busy to remember the children is just too busy. Mark says that "he was much displeased" with the disciples, and then called the children to him and took them up in his arms and blessed them, and furthermore used them for a text about receiving the Kingdom.

The church today is not unmindful of its children—its obligation to them or its need of them. Our responsibility is recognized in the increasingly efficient organization of our Sunday schools with their study periods and supplementary activities. We are trying to train them in Bible truth and Christian living. The church is seeking to work in closer relationship with the home, for it is there that the child must learn the first and

¹ This chapter appeared in part in *Union Seminary Review* and is reprinted by permission.

most important steps in the Christian pathway, as, before them in their tender years, father and mother live and teach and acknowledge the religion of the God who made the home and blesses it. The church is wise that recognizes and stresses the home and parents as the most vital factors in the child's religious training, and seeks to serve, support, and supplement the home in the religious growth of the children.

But there is one element of the child's religious life that the home cannot develop, and which our present church-school methods are not fully adapted to produce, and that is the element of worship. The worship idea is absolutely essential in our religious life. Christian worship is fundamental to Christian character. Like character, then, it must have its beginnings in youth. Much is lacking in the cultivation of worship in our modern church. Except for the words of Jesus himself, the Psalms are the loftiest expression of religious feelings that we know. They reveal a consciousness of God, a sense of adoration toward God and dependence upon him which is instinctively recognized as we find ourselves turning to the Psalms, alike for comfort and courage, for strength and praise, in the hours of our spiritual need. Probably more people read them than any other part of God's Word. And the Psalms are an expression of worship and praise. Our people need more of the conception that God delights in our worship of him. They too often feel that the

church is the place where they are to get something from God. It is therefore no regular custom for them to go up to the house of the Lord on the Sabbath Day, as it was for Jesus. If they feel no need, the service of the church is neglected. This is the weakness of Protestantism. We have not been trained to worship.

Certainly we are lax in the training of our children to worship in our present church services. Our church schools at present entertain them and instruct them, and in adult life turn them over to the church. The Commission on Worship of the Religious Education Association adopted as part of their conclusions regarding the grading of worship that "the nature of worship is essentially the same in the child as in the adult." And "the extent to which the individual worshipper participates in a service of worship depends upon the degree to which the service as a whole and in detail is adapted to his needs, interests, and capacities." It is obvious that if our children have no purposeful training in worship, adapted to their needs, the church can have no lasting hold upon them.

The lack here is not the fault of the church school. It is not equipped for this training. There is not the atmosphere of worship in the church school. There cannot be, even in the departmental worship periods. The church school fulfills that part in the religious training of a child which the church service cannot do. But does the church

recognize and fulfill that part of his training which is its particular task, and that the church school is not equipped to do?

It is not enough for the child to attend the church school. The church service is necessary for his fuller religious development. Somehow the church and church school must work together here. There are some churches that have made radical departures in method to meet this need. One such method is the graded church or unified service. Here worship and study or teaching are linked together usually for a two-hour period on Sunday morning. The adults meet for worship for a period of an hour and a quarter, and then turn to a teaching and study period of three quarters of an hour. Under this plan the children from junior to young people's age have their study and teaching period while the adults are in their worship service, and then have their worship period while the adults are at study. The children of primary age meanwhile have their worship, study, and storytelling, and the beginners and nursery children their story and song and handiwork for the full two-hour period. Thus for two hours the whole family is brought into the church, and all engage in both worship and study, but separately.

Another variation of the plan to train the children more adequately than can be done in the present program of the church school is to form a junior church. Here the church school carries on as now constituted, but there is a separate service

and organization for the children which functions separately during the church worship hour. There is a pastor for the junior congregation. And this is important as it is a real congregation, not a separate meeting to be conducted by many leaders as a storytelling hour. There is a pastor, a congregational organization; there are elders, deacons, choir, committees on finance, ushers. There are projects for youth action as a congregation. Sherwood Gates, in his book *The Junior Church Manual*, suggests no less than sixty-eight projects of activity for a junior congregation. Full membership in this junior congregation means full membership in the church. The service of the junior congregation is a full service on the youth level.

Both graded church and junior church have worked successfully in some churches.

It is not necessary, however, to make such changes to effectively reach our children in this matter of worship participation. It is not imperative that our present church service be greatly altered. Certainly many churches would be hindered by reason of personnel, inadequate equipment, or the unwillingness of the congregation to make such a departure as the junior church or graded church. What any church can do, and what every minister can do, is to make the attempt to draw children into the regular church service by preaching to them short children's sermons. It is true that this does not cover the expressional

side of the child's relationship to his church as the junior church seeks to do, but this may be and should be covered in church school and youth organizations within the church program. Preaching a sermon to children as a part of the worship service is so much more than the average minister is doing for children that we are urging at least this much as a part of every minister's task.

There are many and important reasons for preaching to children. It may be done with great profit to the adults of one's congregation. They are all children, only older grown. There is too much preaching about things we ministers, as ministers, read and study, and too little about things with which the average man is concerned. And the things the average man is concerned about in religion should, furthermore, be treated in terms which he can understand. A greater simplicity in both matter and form is needed. Dwight L. Moody used to say, "Bring the truth down where the lambs may get a bite." And he did not mean that the lambs were necessarily young in years. Too much of our preaching is over the heads of our people intellectually and practically. The appreciation of the adults for the children's sermon clearly indicates that it serves them in a helpful way. Every minister who preaches children's sermons at all well has heard his adult members say that the children's message was on their level, and that if any of the service is to be omitted it should not be the children's sermon.

The adult in the congregation might resent being addressed directly on the child level, but I have found every evidence that he does delight to hear the children's sermons, and is greatly helped by them.

Preaching to children may well be done also by the minister for the sake of one's self. Our best preaching is always concrete and not abstract. It is impossible to preach abstractly to children. Instinctively the concrete method is adopted. Preaching to children is therefore good training for our entire sermon method. It is especially conducive to simplicity of style and structure. It also makes for definiteness. There is no time to ramble in a short children's sermon. Many ministers do not write their sermons in full. But every speaker should do some careful writing. It is almost imperative that a children's sermon be first carefully written, because it must, for one thing, be brief. The practice of preaching to children will therefore provide a much-needed exercise to the man who does little writing. It will make his sermons to the adults more concrete, simple, and definite. He will gain much by way of improvement in all his sermon methods. Children's sermons make also for originality. They lead one out of the beaten paths in search for materials and methods of treatment which will react favorably on all one's other work. A minister needs just this practice for better sermons to adults. Not the least of the benefits to one's self

will be found in the firmer hold one will have upon the gratitude and affection of parents who realize that the minister is doing something for their children. In thus drawing the minister and parents closer together, it is a great help in his ministry to them.

If it be true that the home is the primary factor in the religious development of the child, the children's sermon can be very helpful in supplementing what some parents are trying to do. The children's sermon may be a help in the method of home teaching. Realizing what the minister is attempting to do, and impressed with the fact that he knows something about instruction for children, parents may be led to turn more readily to the minister for help in material and methods for home instruction. If this is one of the effects produced, the children's sermon is indeed worth while. And many of our homes could do more in the religious training of their children if, instead of being told merely that it is their responsibility, they knew that we sought to share in their task and give them some point from which they could go farther. This means that the children's sermon will not be considered an end in itself, but an aid in the efforts of the home.

The essential reason for children's sermons is, of course, the children themselves. And he who has conscientiously given himself to the task of preaching to children will have ample response from them as to its meaning and value in their

lives. Recognizing them as a part of the service brings them into relationship with adults in the entire service, and this is in accord with a sound psychological principle that in the development of children in any area of life they should on occasion share in some of the activities of adults.

There are difficulties, it is true, in preaching to children; but these are more apparent than real. Most of us think that it needs a special type of ability. But it is doubtful whether any minister who can preach the right kind of a sermon to adults can lack the ability to preach to children. When we say that we are not adapted to preach to children, there is entirely too much implied with reference to our ability to preach to adults. It may be questioned, if we cannot preach to children, whether we can preach adequately to adults either. We may think that we can, but it would be interesting to find out what the adults think about it. At any rate, there are no difficulties which cannot be overcome by practice. Most ministers assume that they have improved in preaching since their seminary days. We remember how hard it was to preach then. Some of the difficulties, at least, have been removed through constant sermonizing. We have learned to preach by preaching. So we will learn to preach children's sermons. If we had the audacity, at the beginning of our ministry, to believe that we could someday learn to preach, and if we dare to assume that now we have learned the art, we may well ques-

tion our success if we are not willing frankly to face the new task of learning to preach to children.

There is also the difficulty of time. There is the lack of time in the service itself. This may be met, however, by taking five or six minutes from the regular sermon. From most sermons that may profitably be done. There is the time of preparation. But we can find time for anything we think is of enough importance; and this is important to the child, the home, the church, the adult members, and our own selves.

There are many things which claim a minister's time. He always has the feeling of being pushed and crowded by work which he knows ought to be done, but for which he can find no time. Some things are a great tax on his nervous energy, his courage, and his faith. But preaching to children will not add to the burden. It will bring a man nearer to children and his own youth; and nothing is a greater antidote for tired nerves, lagging courage, or halting faith. It was when the disciples thought that the Master was too busy to be bothered with children that Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." May it not be a suggestion too that he found strength for himself in ministering to them?

Various methods are followed as to when the children's sermon is to be given, and the extent of the children's participation in the service. Usually the children's sermon is given after the

worship period, so that the children may have a complete service of worship, including hymns, scripture, prayer, and their own sermon. Whether they shall leave the service then, during the singing of a hymn, or remain for the regular sermon, is a question for each minister to decide. There is also the question of how to seat the children, either in a group before the pulpit, or with their parents in the family pew. Dismissing the children breaks into the service, creates a problem usually as to where they shall go until the service is finished, and even gives an opportunity for some older children to leave who count themselves young enough to be a part of the children's service only when it thus affords them a chance to slip away and avoid the full service. Seating the children with their parents, instead of in a group, leaves them where they ought to be—in the family pew.

A children's sermon need not be preached every Sunday. If done once a month, on a Sunday designated as Children's Sermon Sunday, it is a challenge for parents who do not bring their children regularly to do so on this children's Sunday. After long experience we have found it best serves the purposes we have in mind in preaching children's sermons to give the children's message just before the offering, having them sit in the pew with their parents for the entire service without giving them an opportunity to leave. And the children's sermon is made an occasion of the serv-

ice on the first Sunday of the month only, except for special times such as Christmas, New Year, and Children's Day services.

Personally if I have any positive "don't" about children's sermons it is relative to using what are termed "object sermons." It is difficult to see what an electric-light bulb can add to a sermon on "Letting One's Light Shine," or an anchor in speaking about "The Anchor of the Soul," or incense in speaking about prayer; or what crayon drawings or cut-out figures can serve to do other than focus attention more on the object than the truth illustrated. For the preacher the use of object sermons tends to emphasize mere cleverness in the choice of them, and for the children quite ignores the fact that the child's thought is essentially inductive, and that the things which will be most helpful to him in his thinking are not symbols or object sermons, but stories and conversations about his own conduct and social relations, which will help him to see religion as a definite experience. Some preachers to children may have thought they were teaching religion when they juggled red and black ink in test tubes to show the redemptive power of the blood of Christ, when the only result was that the child was either more, or was less, intrigued than the Sunday before when a magnet was used to illustrate the drawing power of Christ.

When it is remembered that the purpose of preaching children's sermons is not entertain-

ment, but a teaching of Christian truth and a sharing on the children's part in the worship of God, it will be evident that the children's sermon should be a real sermon. It will therefore have a biblical text and a religious theme. And when once one launches out to preach to children, one will find no lack of texts and themes, or limits in varieties of treatment.

Almost anything can be grist in the mill of children's sermons provided we are trying to make real bread for the nourishing of growing souls. We need not be afraid of great texts and great themes. It is good often to be challenged by the endeavor to keep great texts and great themes in so simple and understandable a framework as Jesus did. We have less impulse to be profound in the children's sermon. We would benefit more than the children, though they are reason enough for not neglecting to preach to them on sin, temptation, forgiveness, prayer, the cross, the love, the mercy, and the justice of God. Many a sermon preached to adults may later be taken as a subject for a children's sermon. This will often answer the question, "What shall I preach about to the children?" but it may also often give the adults, for the first time, some idea of what the original sermon was about.

Listening to things that children say, observing what they do, noting the questions they ask, will all add to one's store of themes. Sayings and doings, and questions of children, come to us in in-

creasing numbers as we try to preach to children. They come not only from our own increased awareness of them, but from parents and friends who will tell about them.

Books of children's sermons may be helpful or not according to how they are used. Scanning a number of good books of children's sermons—and good ones are all too few—is helpful to increase one's sense of the exceedingly wide and fertile field one has from which to preach. The books may be a guide and a stimulus to one's own resourcefulness as to both subject and method. But nothing can be more stultifying to any personal growth in the art of interpreting the wonder and glory of religious truth to growing minds than to preach the children's sermons of others. It will make the task of preaching far harder in the end, for we are not then learning how to do it ourselves. There is certain to be something of a freshness and reality lacking which will be felt even by the children. A good book of children's sermons ought to serve us as Jesus used the parable of the good Samaritan. When Jesus had given the questioner a fitting example of what a neighbor was, he told the man to be a neighbor on his own, and go and do likewise.

Preaching to children is not the only answer to our ministering in behalf of the children, but it is one of them. And I cannot see why any minister should not try to do it.

XV

In a World at War

WAR! WAR CHALLENGES EVERYONE TO NEW DUTIES. It brings the minister face to face with the question as to what constitutes his task in regard to war. Some of us who were ministers in the other World War are helped by the humbling memories of the part we then played. The church is playing a far nobler role in the war life of our day than it ever did in the past. It has a clearer vision of its task in wartime as the bulwark of a spiritual morale and stamina for trying times. When a group of ministers asked President Wilson in 1917 what they could do to help the war, he replied: "You go back and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to need that." Not many of us did it then. We hope that we are going to do much better now.

War disrupts everything in our life, and the church no less than everything else. As ministers we must do our best to think things through, that our energies may not be misdirected. It seems to me that, first of all, we must face the fact that war is never our main business. The question before us, whether it is of war or peace, is not narrowed down to either pacifism or militarism.

There is a prominent minister who believes utterly in nonresistance, but who refuses to be labeled merely a pacifist. The position he takes on war is one that, he says, comes from his interpretation of the total message of Christianity. As a minister he considers himself an advocate of the whole gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Kingdom of God as a realistic thing in our world. He is certainly correct in his belief that no minister can be only a pacifist. The same thing is true of the minister who conscientiously believes in the use of force. He must be much more than a supporter of military action. Neither pacifism or militarism is enough for us.

There is, of course, tremendous pressure inevitably brought to bear upon the church and its ministry in time of war. It is unthinkable that we should in any way fail to do our part. We have a part and it is an essential one. We must not be diverted from it either by our emotions, by any loose thinking in ourselves, or by pressure of enthusiasm from without. We must never let go the truth that Christianity is the basis of our civilization, but that it is not the basis and the bulwark of the existing social order. Our Christianity is never to be identified with the maintenance of the *status quo*. Christianity fails if it ever limits itself to things as they are instead of being a ringing challenge for things as they ought to be. The four freedoms are worth saving at all costs; but the four freedoms have not been enough in

the past, and will not be enough in the future, for the kind of world God means this world to be. The economic pattern of the democracies is better than that of the totalitarian states; but if we are to fight only for the economic life as it is, even in the democracies, victory will not mean much. We are not even serving our country to the fullest if we put any part of the truth of God in cold storage for the duration, under the pressure of the plea, from whatever source, that the only thing necessary now is to win the war. The one thing we are not to do is to limit our message and our work to being drum majors for the State. We could never hurt the cause of real democracy more than by laying aside our mantle of prophets of righteousness.

Waving the flag is always an easy form of patriotism. It means very little; and when done by those whose part should be so much more, it is even perilous to a country's cause. It is appallingly easy for a minister in wartime to succumb to playing to the gallery. It is a temptation always present, but never so subtle as in the atmosphere and tempo of war. Sensational subjects for sermons, denunciation of the enemy, anything savoring of hatred, and all the claptrap of a cheap patriotism may win the applause of some unthinking people, but it is a poor business for a minister of Christ. And this need not be crudely done or consciously done. But whether with finesse or superficiality, we need to watch our-

selves lest we be only a part of a mob spirit while telling ourselves that we are leading a crusade.

It is always a desperately serious thing to be a minister. We deal with the most abiding things in life. Eternal truth is in our keeping. We can "nobly serve or meanly destroy" the things without which no people can truly live either in time of peace or in war. And whether we build or tear down will depend much on our own inner spirit. For one thing, no true minister can himself possess a belligerent spirit. Even the Old Testament prophets, fiery and tempestuous as they seem to be, and who denounced with scathing words of flame, invariably end with a wooing invitation to accept the tender mercy of a forgiving God. The cleansing of the Temple by Jesus is often used as a justification for a righteous anger and a belligerent spirit. But this single show of force on the part of Jesus was against a misuse of the house of God. The spirit of the world had entered it. Casting it all out, Jesus said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." The business of the world's strife has no more place in the house of God than does the business of trade. If the church is to be the church, its ministers must seek to possess the spirit of Christ, however difficult that may be to achieve.

Our preaching will be, and must be, affected by the fact of war. It will determine our themes and our treatment of them. But it is a time to go down deep into the things of God rather than to do any

surface mining. The best example of significant wartime preaching I know is in Leslie D. Weatherhead's book *This Is the Victory*. In his chapter on "Faith Must Keep Her Eyes on God," he speaks of

two passages in the Scriptures, written down by prophets whose people were under the fear of the threat of armed force. In the messages of both these men there is no reference whatever to the armed force!

. . . . The first is in Isaiah 40, and runs like this: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem . . . , and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. . . . Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

Turn to the second passage. Five hundred years afterwards we find John the Baptist, living at a time when the men he loved most were ground down under the heel of the Roman tyranny, bringing the message of the good news about Jesus in these words: "As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." ¹

From the midst of a situation of warfare in which the homes of his people have been bombed and their church edifice destroyed, Dr. Weather-

¹ Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941, pp. 72-73.

head says, "What we need to say to one another is a word about God."²

As ministers we have a task that belongs to no one else. The words of President Wilson to ministers about preaching the gospel are pertinent still. The word gospel, of course, has a wide content. Some preach it within a limit of otherworldliness alone; for some it is confined to a highly emotional response. It is not only our colored brethren who are too often content with shouting "Hallelujah" or "Amen." For many the gospel is limited to an acceptance of a form of words, and one has the "true gospel" only within the pattern of literalness. The word gospel may mean little or it may mean much. And it does not mean much unless it includes a world-saving as well as a soul-saving pattern of life. The one thing everyone most needs in wartime, as they need it in peacetime too, is food for the soul. There are other organizations and agencies whose task it is to promote patriotism and foster a military spirit. There are only the church and the minister to preach the gospel as the sustaining, undergirding power for all of life. What do most men need now except faith, courage, moral stamina, a sense of eternal values, patience, hope, trust, and every spiritual asset either in war or peace? And in war the drain upon life without the presence of these spiritual things is indeed prodigious.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

We are not statesmen; we are not soldiers. As private citizens we have individual responsibilities, but as ministers we are shepherds of the souls of men. When Jesus gave his final commission to Peter—Peter, emotionally unstable often, impetuous, blowing hot and cold with the currents of opinion round about him, rash and fearful by turns—Jesus thrice said to him, “Feed my sheep.” His was to be a shepherd’s task. There could be no mistake about that. The shepherds of Jesus’ day were brave and fearless men. They would fight to protect their sheep. But they were not in themselves fighting men. They carried a crook and a staff, not a sword. And a sword, neither literally nor figuratively, is a part of the equipment of any ministering shepherd. “Let the church be the church,” and let the minister be a minister, and not anything else. He is not an isolationist or an interventionist; he is not a pacifist or a militarist. He is not “either or” anything. He is an ambassador of the Kingdom of God. He is a prophet of righteousness. He is a preacher of eternal truth. He is a minister, and a minister is a pastor, and a pastor is a shepherd. He, as a successor of the apostles, must have the apostolic spirit and do an apostle’s work. Isn’t that enough? Why not try to do our job, and let other leaders do theirs? That is the one thing for us all in wartime—that we do our own job, and do it well. “This one thing I do!” That is a statement both of determination and of choice. To say that our

one thing is to preach the gospel may seem to some to be utterly meaningless, so many are the ways it may be interpreted. But I dare say any one of us knows definitely enough what it means for himself. "This one thing I do!" Why don't we do it then?

XVI

Faltering in Our Task of Happiness

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake.

SO PRAYED ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. SOME OF US should make it a part of our daily prayer. We have a "task of happiness" because of our calling, and the gospel we are to live as well as preach.

It has frequently been noted that when ministers get together they are an especially merry crew. In the company of one another their merriment and mirth seem effervescent. In a convention they can be as hilarious as college boys, as when some ministerial wag, at a Presbyterian General Assembly, tipped a bellboy in a hotel full of clergy to page "Elmer Gantry." And the gaiety and good cheer is from a natural flow of spirits, not liquid, as in so many gatherings of men. Yet individually this is often far from the ministerial mood. It is not always true of human beings, at

least, that the whole is equal to the sum of all its parts. Breaking down a cheerful group of ministers into individual units by no means indicates individuals of blithesome and joyous spirit. Sadly enough, we are sometimes like the old man who played his fiddle for the children in the street. He could always be found, with a happy smile and nimble fingers, giving pleasure to a host of children who gathered around him. One day someone spoke to his wife about it, saying that she must be a happy woman to have a husband so jovial and spreading such good cheer. To which the realistic wife grimly replied, "But he hangs up his fiddle when he gets home." In a Gallup Poll to determine the happiest and most cheering person in a community, probably not many ministers would be named. Many of us are not especially marked by "the joy of the Lord," which Nehemiah declared is our strength. We do a lot of griping, and are afflicted with self-pity and envy. We are often lacking in the very courage and sunny fortitude we so strongly recommend to others. Instead of a joyful noise unto the Lord, we play a dirge. There is the old story, related in many forms, of the Doctor of Divinity who, when addressed as a physician, said, "Oh, no, I don't practice; I preach." Of the joy and the exhilaration of our personal religion, as of so many other things, it is too often woefully and literally true of us that we just preach.

And in so far as any spirit of personal droopi-

ness possesses us, it is a drag upon us in our pastoral usefulness. Because we have a pastoral task, we ought to be an inspiration and an uplift to others. A true happiness of peace and contentment is possible for us, though we do not always give that impression.

Does any real brightness shine in upon others from many of us? The Psalmist said, "They looked unto him, and were radiant." There is a joy in the Lord that means a sparkle in our eye, a light upon our faces, our heads up and shoulders back, not just in spite of difficulties, but because of them—because they have caused us to go down deeper into the sources of life. Our people have a right to look to us as true examples of what a Christian ought to be. It is wholly fitting that we should win them to our winsome Lord by what we are more than by what we say. Our sermons may often be poorly said, but our lives should never be poor preaching. We have chosen a work in which what we are is the greatest of all factors. Our inner harmony of spirit is of signal import for our own lives; but the inevitable manifestation of it in outward joy and gladness is of even greater meaning, as men looking for brightness and hope see it in us and turn to Him who came that their joy might be full.

Let it be remembered that we are very largely the creators of our happiness or unhappiness. It is quite the rule for us to believe the fiction that our ministerial lives are determined by the things

beyond our control—by the kind of church we serve, by standards set up for us, by being at the beck and call of others, by the pressure of sermons and meetings and committees and organization. As a matter of fact, in a distinct sense a pastor is thrown back on his own resources. There is no one to detail his work. He punches no clock. He makes no report of a day's activities. He is permitted to judge for himself of the comparative value of things, of what to do and how to do it. That is a great privilege. It is also a great danger. He can get by with very little. Some of our people will accept cerebral languor for spiritual fatigue. There are some who are always ready piously to approve of whatever their pastor does, to sympathize and to pity. Many of those who may be critical of us are yet courteous and considerate toward us. It is true that there are some things which we cannot control; but we are free to make over these things to serve us, and not to unmake us. We cannot command others. We are subject to voluntary service and support in many things we plan. But that is a pattern in which there is more personal satisfaction possible than if we could command that things be done. There is no one left quite so much to self-determination. We are left to our own devices. We do make our own bed, whether it be hard or soft.

We choose unhappiness for ourselves whenever we succumb to a spirit of restlessness about our field of labor. It is not always the proverbial mule

to whom pastures green are ever on the other side of the fence. A denominational executive tells me that in one state with which he is especially familiar fifty per cent of the ministers would like to change their pastorates. I know without being told that many ministers who know me personally would say, "It is easy for him to talk about happiness from a happy ministry in a fine church for more than a score of years." But my church has its problems. No one can always be content. I am not. I would not like to lose my job; but, now and then, I would terribly like to mislay it. I have known black moods when any place looked better to me. The one place to resist this is, of course, on our knees. Furthermore, some of us can never be happy until we go out in the back yard and tear down all the wires we have strung up, running out in all directions, hoping that one of them will ring the bell of a "call" for us. Unless our talk about our original "call" to the church we serve was just pious words, that "call" must sometimes be considered a continuing call to stay where we are. No man can do good work, or be personally happy, and have wires strung all over the place that he is forever pulling to get out of the church where he claims the Lord called him in the first place.

And self-pity is self-destroying. Any minister can find plenty of things that will nourish self-pity. E. Stanley Jones tells of coming home from a missionary itinerary, having been delayed be-

yond the expected time more than twenty-four hours, and arriving at midnight in a torrential downpour. He was feeling, he said, very sorry for himself. Then, as he approached the mission station, he saw a light burning on the porch, and said to himself, "Well, I am glad that somebody has been worrying about me and is waiting up for me." Upon reaching the porch, however, he found another missionary who hardly looked in his direction, but who began to complain of an aching tooth and of his lack of sleep. Then with characteristic good humor it dawned on Dr. Jones how each was pitying self, and neither was sensitive to the other's need. And, says Dr. Jones, "To meet trouble with self-pity is only to create a pitiable self." A sermon was preached to me in a single sentence, which I hope that I shall never forget, when a woman confined to a hospital bed for a long siege of heart trouble bravely and sincerely said, "I have been asking the Lord what he wants to teach me in this." That is the antithesis of self-pity.

Forever trying to measure our gains and to tally our success is fraught with certain dispiritment and gloom. It is not always possible to measure rewards or count returns. And whenever it is possible, this does not necessarily insure a brightness of heart. I was once a guest in the home of a pastor in New York City. It was on a Monday, when the day before the minister had received some twenty new members into the

church, some of them adults on confession of their faith. Yet he was in an utterly discouraged mood, much to the bewilderment of another guest, a younger man who was young, too, as an officer in the church. The downhearted host asked this young officer to say grace. I do not know that he had ever prayed in public before, but his unskilled prayer brought the quickest answer I ever witnessed, as he prayed, "Dear Lord, cheer up those who are down in the dumps and haven't any right to be." And his pastor burst into laughter with all his dark mood gone. Counting gains helps little. It is traditional to picture a miser gloating in glee as he fingers his golden coins. I doubt if it is ever a true picture. The miser is much more likely to count them and be miserable because there are not more of them; for, as his only joy is in numbers, no amount can ever be enough. Elijah had a spectacular success before the altars of Baal. Immediately after, he fled in terror and despair. Probably his trouble was that he had been counting noses too, for he said, "I only am left." Our human yardsticks seem never able to stake off doubt and fear, to make safe our happiness and contentment.

Apparent failures, also, take their toll of our inner strength and spirit. I once heard a paper read in a group of ministers on "Trends in Sabbath Observance," in which the leader painted a picture of almost complete spiritual decay. My! But that was a dismal picture of the church and

Christian people! He presented no hope or promise whatever, and had no conception at all that the manifestations of religion might possibly not be the same in every generation. I was even more amazed at the number of ministers present who in their comments agreed or enlarged upon the picture of defeat. It was all dispelled, however, by the simple statement of an old German pastor who, steeped in the restrictions of Calvinism but with Calvin's confidence in God too, said, with a blur of his native tongue still upon him, "I haf been a pastor for more dan fifty years, and I vant to say it is better all along de line." Even if the worst is true, we are licked before we start if we believe in failure. There are three good reasons why a minister should lay down his task. One is physical disability; another is loss of Christian character; and the third is this sense of defeat. God can never do anything with a man with his heart in his boots or his tail between his legs. Ancient Caleb asked for the hill country. He could never be happy or useful in the easy life of the plains.

It is apparent that there are sources enough for ministerial unhappiness and failure—at least that many of us find them readily enough. How then can we be happy though a minister? And by happy, of course, we mean happiness in all its content of peace and strength, of adequacy and worth.

We could try, for a change, turning our

thoughts to the inestimable privileges that are ours. One of them is that of the many personal relationships of friendship, love, and respect that are ours. There is no coin of material values that could pay for the minister's privilege of contacts with people, of enjoying the opportunity of serving them, and of feeling their love and good will. We all must have some innate quality of loving people, or we would never have gotten into this business of the ministry. No other profession touches human lives at so many points. No man has such an outpouring of appreciation for what he is privileged to do as the minister. A businessman said to his minister who had received a letter of gratitude, "I would give thousands of dollars if I had the opportunity of anyone writing to me like that." But he just did not have the opportunity that the minister had. We would not change places with anybody else really. Then we can do our job in that spirit too.

We can be proud that we belong to an order of those who give much. There was Frederick H. Baetjer, a missionary doctor who swallowed the deadly germs of a dread Oriental disease in order to get them into this country and to Johns Hopkins Medical School, where he could study them to discover a remedy, and who was willing to risk his own life, since, dead or alive, the germs would be there for scientific study. Our sacrifices are little beside such, and nothing at all beside many prophets and martyrs; but we belong to their

order, and when we sing, "Who follows in their train?" we can answer, if in our little way we are faithful, "We do."

We are on the winning side in every moral battle of life. A friend, who was born in the North, and who married a Southern girl, was walking with his eight-year-old son when, passing a Confederate soldiers' monument, the lad asked what it was. The father explained that it was a monument to the soldiers of the South, saying, "That's your side, you know; your mother's people fought for the South." Then, characteristically of youth, the lad replied, "No, sir, that's not my side. I'm on the side that won." We are on the side that is sure to win, though our part may be small, the place where we are on guard may be limited, and our field of service restricted. But no army has ever, even in these days of mechanization, found a substitute for the private in the ranks, or a good top sergeant who is close to the heart of things in the army. Generals and captains are essential, but it is the top sergeant and the privates who carry out the orders. We have our great radio preachers, and those who travel the country over in preaching missions and the like, and we have our great city churches, but the heart of the Kingdom of God is in the little church, in the privates of the line, and the ministers who are the top sergeants in the army of the Lord. Are we one of these? President Wilson used to say that he preferred to hear what the men on the cracker bar-

rels of the village grocery stores were saying to anything he could hear in Washington. Well, the cracker barrels and the village philosophers have disappeared before the chain stores, but the village church and the village pastor remain the symbol of the backbone of our sturdy thought and life. Paul wrote to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete." It was a hard job, and an important one; that was why he was there. Paul also said to him, "Let no man despise thee." He meant, of course, so respect your task and so carry it on that none will belittle you. He counted on Titus not to belittle himself. We all have a task that is too big for us, but that is the only kind worth having. The hosts of evil are mighty. "We are perplexed, but not in despair." The ultimate victory is certain because "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And there is a personal victory possible for us now. It is expressed in the words of Woodrow Wilson when he said, "I would rather go down to defeat with a cause that will ultimately triumph than win with a cause that will ultimately go down to defeat." No power on earth can invalidate that ultimate victory. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Whoever we are, or wherever we are, we can know the joy of sheer fidelity to a mighty, ongoing, righteous, undefeatable cause, and lift our heads in pride that we have even a humble part in it.

We have good news to tell. It is a glorious thing

to have been chosen to tell it. And we are ministers because something of that good news did something to us one day. We do not know everything, but we do know that. Dr. Daniel Poling tells that one day, when he was busy, his little boy asked him a question about religion. He said, "You go and ask your mother about that." Soon the little fellow came back again and he volunteered some information, saying, "Daddy, you don't know much about God, do you?" That struck home, and Dr. Poling laid his book aside and said, with deeper truth than he had ever realized before, "No, son, I don't know much about God, but what I do know has changed my life." That we too know. And that we know not from hearsay, or from any book. Isn't it possible that we might find a new joy in our ministry by getting back to a simple affirmation and proclamation of a life-changing gospel, and letting any defense of it rest in the simple challenge to men to "taste and see" for themselves?

"Dick" Sheppard once said that the modern minister had largely substituted the flute for the trumpet. That may be why some of us have lost something of our zest and joy. A flute is a charming instrument, but it is a trumpet that thrills. We are told that there is an old Jewish legend that Satan was once asked what it was that he most missed since he had fallen from the high estate in heaven. "I miss most of all," said he, "the sounding of the trumpets in the morning."

In days of avowal of service and loyalty, we might well take as our own these words of Cecil Spring-Rice, once the Ambassador of Britain to the United States:

I vow to thee, my country—all earthly things above—
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love,
The love that asks no questions: the love that stands
the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago—
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that
know—

We may not count her armies: we may not see her king—
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering—
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds in-
crease,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths
are peace.

We once enlisted as soldiers of that country. Its campaign is not military, but it is militant. And the way to keep our estate, and the trumpets sounding in our hearts, is to vow a new allegiance, and an all-out commitment of ourselves to the Lord of heaven, that we will not fail him, either in what we do or in what in our heart of hearts we are.

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JUN 20 1944 C.T.S. Derm. - Blane Lane
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JUL 1 1945 J.G. Kehl
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JUN 5 1945 Lynn
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